

Ecevit sets Monday deadline to form Turkish government

ANKARA (AFP) — Prime minister-designate Bulent Ecevit on Friday gave himself at most three days to form a new government after a potential partner declined to support his Democratic Left party.

Speaking after consultations with Deniz Baykal, head of the left-wing Republican People's Party (CHP), Ecevit told reporters: "There might be another formula, but I shall not wait to remit my task to the president, by Monday at the latest."

Ecevit's comments came after Baykal refused to support a minority government containing only members of the Democratic Left (DSP), which counts 61 deputies in the 550-member parliament. Baykal's CHP party has 55

deputies. Ecevit, a 73-year-old veteran of Turkish politics and former premier, was asked by President Suleyman Demirel to form a new government on Dec. 2, a week after outgoing premier Mesut Yilmaz was toppled in a no-confidence vote on Nov. 25 because of alleged criminal links.

Yilmaz, whose Motherland Party (ANAP) occupies 136 seats, has expressed his "total support" for Ecevit. But another former premier, Tansu Ciller, told reporters on Thursday that her right-wing True Path Party (DYP) would not back him.

With 99 deputies, Ciller has said she deserves the prime minister post. She has also consistently said that

she favours a grand coalition of all parties including the Islamist Fazilet, the largest in parliament.

Despite Yilmaz's support and the proposal of three different coalition models, Ecevit has failed to cobble together a parliamentary majority. He has excluded Fazilet from talks. Fazilet, whose leadership is strongly opposed by the army, has 144 deputies and normally its chief, Recai Kutan, would be invested with the task of forming a new government.

If Ecevit ultimately fails to form a government, one of Demirel's options would be to constitute a government in which all parties — Fazilet included — would be represented in proportion to parliamentary numbers.



FUNERAL FOR PALESTINIAN PROTESTOR: Palestinians in the West Bank town of Bet Duka on Friday carry the body of Mohammad Ahmad Daoud, 19, who was shot by Israeli troops the previous day during a pro-Iraq demonstration in Al Bireb. Thousands of people protested the U.S.-led air strikes against Iraq all around the West Bank (Reuters photo)

Iraqi opposition divided over U.S. strikes

AMMAN (J.T.) — Far away from Amman and Baghdad, Iraq's exiled opposition was divided in its response to the U.S.-led strike.

A representative of the London-based opposition umbrella group, the Iraqi National Congress, said the opposition supports the "brutal air strikes" if they lead to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

But the Shiite Muslim Al Dawa party said the strikes would only "increase Saddam's power by improving his image with the Arab and Islamic public."

The Iraqi National Accord, calling on the army and the elite Republican Guard to declare a rebellion against the Iraqi president, urged the military to foil Saddam's "criminal designs."

In a statement faxed to the Jordan Times, the opposition group said the Iraqi leader was responsible for the confrontation, but warned of the dangers of the U.S. policy towards Baghdad and its people.

An Iraqi analyst told the Jordan Times that the only organized opposition in and outside Iraq was the Islamic grouping, mainly Shiite, but that they were not seen as a "politically attractive" alternative for the regime by the United States, Gulf states, and even by most Iraqis.

"It will be the Americans who will determine Iraq's future," he said. "Long before Washington formally laid out the political and legal framework, they spoke of changing the regime, but so far it has been all talk and no action," said the exile, frustrated by the lack of U.S. commitment to overthrowing Saddam.

Recently, the American president signed into law the "Iraq Liberation Act," which allocates \$97 million to help oust Saddam. But critics say the opposition, which does enjoy credibility at home, cannot, without effective American involvement in the effort to change the regime, make effective changes.

"The people inside want to finish with the regime but all they see is more catastrophe, more destruction and more misery as a result of American actions."

U.S.-backed Radio Free Iraq increases broadcasts

PRAGUE (R) — U.S.-sponsored Radio Free Iraq has increased broadcasts against President Saddam Hussein's government following American air attacks on Baghdad.

The service, launched on Oct. 30 as two half-hour reports a day from Radio Free Europe (RFE) headquarters in Prague, has expanded to a pair of two-hour broadcasts since coming on air early on Thursday during the initial attacks by U.S. forces.

"Obviously, our news was dominated by the military operation, reactions, and related stories," Radio Free Iraq director David Newton told Reuters on Friday.

"We did the two hours live because it was a breaking story. Our people were taking English texts and translating them on the air. Essentially we are doing the same thing, except that we are doing more of it."

Newton said his service will expand to six hours daily soon.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Congress approved funding for the Arabic-language Radio Free Iraq — along with a separate service for Iran in Farsi — aiming to promote democratic opposition in both countries.

Senior Republican senators including Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms called on

the Clinton administration on Thursday to step up efforts to topple Hussein, including using radio broadcasts.

"We are trying to give the Iraqi listeners a balanced point of view. We're reporting reaction from around the world — positive and negative, and from the Middle East, positive and negative," he said.

His radio service, along with the Cold War-inspired Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, is managed independently. Newton said its content was not influenced by the government.

"Of course we are following the Radio Free Europe tradition of using truth and objectivity to get through the totalitarian wall," Newton said.

"In the long term we share the same goals of democracy and human rights. Rights that are incompatible with the existing regime [in Iraq]."

Czech officials have increased security around the central Prague headquarters, as a precaution against possible retaliation against U.S. interests.

The Clinton administration accepted an invitation from President Vaclav Havel to move RFE from its cold war base in Munich in 1995, as a way of cutting costs.

The new services are beamed into the Middle East on shortwave frequencies from antennae in England, Germany and Greece.

Amnesty concerned over civilian deaths in Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — Amnesty International is gravely concerned at the potential indiscriminate killings of civilians in Iraq, in the context of the present military operations by U.S. and U.K. forces.

The organization said in a press release faxed to the Jordan Times from London.

According to reports, around 30 people were killed and 100 others wounded, some seriously, during the attack on Baghdad, which started on Wednesday. Missiles are reported to have fallen on residential areas of the city, destroying a number of houses. Iran said a U.S. missile struck the city of Khorramshahr, near the border with Iraq, early on Thursday. No casualties were reported.

In June 1997, a U.S. General Accounting Office report, entitled "Operation Desert Storm — Evaluation of the Air Campaign," stated that "many of the

Department of Defence's and Manufacturers' post-war claims about weapon system performance — particularly the F117, Tomahawk land attack missile and laser guided bombs — were overstated, misleading, inconsistent with the best available data, or unverifiable.

"The experience of previous armed interventions in the Gulf has shown that, all too often, civilians become the acceptable casualties of war," Amnesty International said, adding that on Dec. 16 the organization warned that "imminent military attacks by U.S. and U.K. forces could lead to indiscriminate or disproportionate killings of civilians."

Noting reports that a wheat storage house in Tikrit, north of Baghdad, is said to have been burnt by missiles, the human rights organization reminded the U.S. and U.K. governments of the

general prohibition in international humanitarian law to attack objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

Amnesty International is also concerned about the closure by Jordan, Syria and Turkey of their borders with Iraq which would prevent people fleeing the attacks from seeking safety in these countries, said the statement. Amnesty International calls on all neighbouring countries to guarantee the right to protection in another country for refugees fleeing when their life, safety and security are at risk.

"The human rights organization reiterates that the international community has an obligation to provide all necessary assistance to ensure that the responsibility of dealing with refugees is shared by all states and does not fall disproportionately on those geographically close to Iraq."

ICRC urges U.S., U.K., Iraq to respect humanitarian law

AMMAN (J.T.) — In view of the military operations launched against Iraq on Wednesday, the International Committee of the Red Cross Thursday addressed a diplomatic note to the United States, British and Iraqi governments reminding them of their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, an ICRC statement said.

Under this body of law, those conducting hostilities must take all necessary precautions to spare civilians and civilian property, to treat captured persons humanely, to ensure that the wounded and sick have access to medical care, to protect medical facilities, staff and means of transport, and to guarantee respect for the Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems.

Meanwhile the ICRC team in Baghdad, including a nurse and a water engineer, are gathering information from the city's hospitals and from the ministries of health and foreign affairs with a view to affording all victims the necessary assistance in accordance with the mandate entrusted to the organization by the international community.

Since the 1991 Gulf war, the ICRC has been giving support to water treatment stations throughout the country in order to provide the population with clean water. In addition, it delivers emergency supplies and assistance to the victims of the ongoing hostilities in northern Iraq. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is also present in Baghdad.

The ICRC has a staff of 10 expatriates in Baghdad and a further eight persons in northern Iraq, said the statement.

Israeli official regrets Polish missile deal cancellation

WARSAW (AFP) — Israeli parliament speaker Dan Tichon expressed regret Friday over Poland's decision to cancel a billion-dollar contract for Israel to equip its Polish-built helicopters with anti-tank missiles.

"The Polish government presented strange arguments which do not convince me," he said in Warsaw, where he is heading a four-day visit by an Israeli parliamentary delegation.

Warsaw cancelled the deal to equip Huzar helicopters with NT-D missiles earlier this month because Israel had not yet arranged to test fire the missiles in Poland and the proposed test date was not soon enough.

"This date will be even

later if the contract is put out for tender again," Tichon said, adding that the failure of the 5,000-missile deal "could weigh on future Israeli investment in Poland."

Polish officials also said the contract was signed shortly before a change of government in October 1997. In addition it was signed only by one minister, not two as required by Polish law.

The Israeli missiles, which are still in the experimental stage, were to be manufactured in Poland between 1999 and 2013.

Tichon meanwhile welcomed Polish authorities' efforts to resolve a dispute over dozens of crucifixes erected by Catholics out-

side the former Nazi death camp at Auschwitz. More than 90 per cent of Poles are Catholic.

Jews have protested that the crosses violate an agreement not to erect religious symbols near the camp in southern Poland.

"We are not against the Polish church. We just want our feelings to be respected," said Tichon.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Animaniacs
15:30 The Adventures of the Bush Patrol
16:00 Drama - Neighbours
16:30 (Ch.2 links with Ch.1)
17:00 French programme
18:15 Doc. - Omar Ben Abdul Aziz
19:00 New in French
19:15 Words of Wisdom
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy - Murphy Brown
20:00 Islam in a Changing World
20:30 Drama - The Pretender
21:10 An ABC Democracy
21:20 Boston Pops Orchestra
22:00 News in English
22:30 Feature film - "Cold Enough for Snow"
23:59 Twisted
01:00 End of T.T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

05:03 Fajr
06:26 (Sunrise) Duha
11:33 Dhuhur
14:17 Asr
16:40 Maghreb
18:02 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4634590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4634853/4634811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle Church Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifieh Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679
Madaba 06/14
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Depart-

ment of Meteorology
Moderate weather conditions will prevail during the day becoming cool at night. Skies will be partly cloudy and winds easterly to southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 05/15
Aqaba 10/21
Deserts 02/18
Jordan Valley 12/22

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 15 Aqaba 21. Humidity readings: Amman 55 per cent, Aqaba 45 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 04/11
Jerash 10/17
Um Qays 09/16
Madaba 06/14
Petra 05/16
Dead Sea 13/23

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Youssef Fagih 4390104

Dr. Ghazi Abu Stulha 4752405
Dr. Mukhlis Halash 5519220
Dr. Rudi Sukkar 5836457
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Ruhi Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Issam Salih 021246858
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Issa Omari (09)901266
Palestine Pharmacy (09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 7871111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 5661317
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 464281/6
Akileh Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdli 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3
Al-Basili 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:
Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital (02) 7101372, (02) 7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital (02) 7102831, (02) 7102011
Specialty Hospital (02) 7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)52700 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-S.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

08:00 Tehran (RJ)
08:30 Damascus (RJ)
08:50 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:10 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
11:00 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:00 Colombo (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
15:55 London (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
19:40 Berlin (RJ)
19:40 Rome (RJ)
19:40 Frankfurt (RJ)
00:40 Larnaca (RJ)
01:00 Paris (add) (RJ)
04:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:00 Bangkok, Sharjah (RJ)

Other Flights

13:05 Vienna (OS)
13:15 Riyadh (SV)
13:20 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
14:05 Rome (AZ)
18:00 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
19:05 Paris (AF)
19:15 Frankfurt (LH)
21:35 Cairo (MS)
22:55 London, Damascus (BA)
23:35 Amsterdam (KL)
01:00 Belgrade (JU)

Royal Wings (RW)

09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
10:10 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

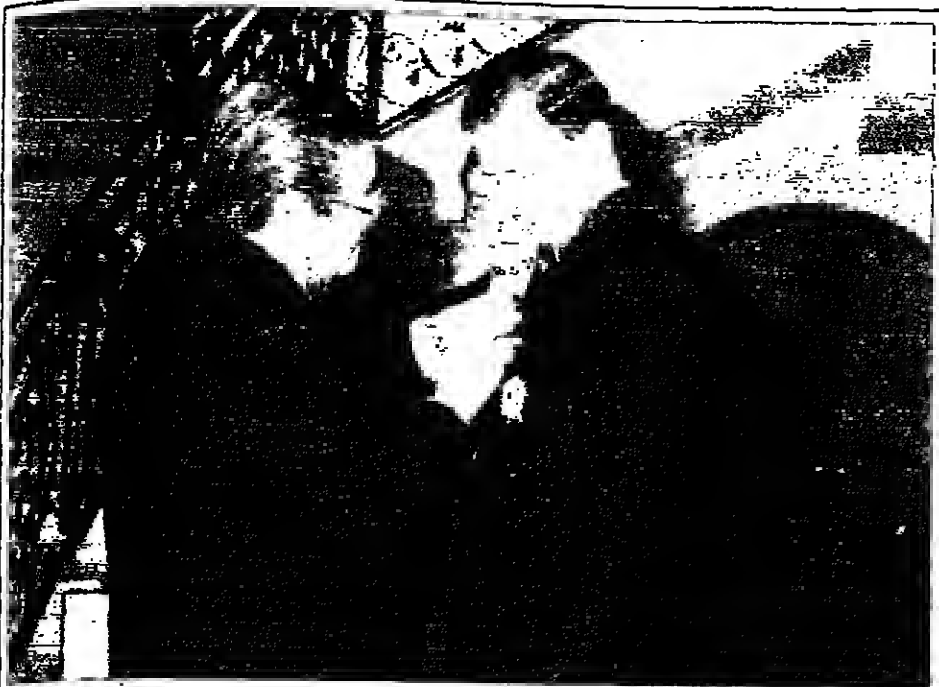
06:30 Beirut (RJ)
09:35 Frankfurt (RJ)
10:00 Berlin (add) (RJ)
11:15 Rome (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
12:45 Brussels, Paris (RJ)
20:00 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:15 Bombay (RJ)
20:30 Jeddah (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:25 Larnaca (RJ)
23:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

06:15 Damascus, London (BA)
06:30 Larnaca (CY)
14:15 Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)
14:45 Riyadh (SV)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
19:40 Dubai (EK)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
22:35 Cairo (MS)
00:35 Amsterdam (KL)
02:10 Belgrade (JU)

Royal Wings (RW)

07:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)



PRINCE FAISAL RECEIVES CHILEAN MEDAL: Chilean Ambassador Claudio Aliaga on Thursday presented HRH Prince Faisal with Chile's most distinguished medal during a private ceremony held at the ambassador's residence. The medal was conferred by Chilean President Ernesto Frei in recognition of Prince Faisal's efforts to develop Jordan's relations with Latin America in general and with Chile in particular. Prince Faisal said he took pride in the honour from the Chilean president and praised the two countries' strong bilateral ties. Aliaga said a visit to Chile by Prince Faisal and HRH Princess Alia had helped to further bolster ties. HRH Prince Abdullah, HRH Princess Rania and Princess Alia attended the ceremony (Petra photo)

Jordan 'well prepared' for possible effects of U.S.-U.K. strikes against Iraq

Sufficient stocks of vital supplies for several weeks — minister

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — The government Friday said it had enough fuel, food and other vital supplies to last for several weeks in the wake of U.S.-led strikes against Iraq, its only source of petroleum products.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadi said Jordan decided to re-open its border with Iraq — briefly closed after Wednesday's air strikes — but only after it took necessary measures to prevent a possible flood of Iraqi refugees into the country similar to the situation that occurred during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

"We are well prepared. The stores of the private sector and the government are full with all needed food," Trade Minister Mohammad Saleh Hourani told the Jordan Times. "And even if air strikes on Iraq continue, imports through our airports, borders and port will not be affected as these outlets remain open."

Minister of Water and Energy Hani Mulki said Jordan had enough crude oil to last for 20 days, liquefied gas for 16 days, diesel and gasoline for nearly two months, kerosene for over three months and fuel oil for 86 days.

He said the fair might be extended if sales did not meet expectations. The corporation is currently preparing for fairs in Gaza, Iran, Algeria, Yemen and Saudi Arabia which are expected to take place within the first quarter of 1999.

This is the second direct-sale Jordanian fair in Iraq and the 30th overall, including Jordan's participation in the Baghdad International Fair. Iraq is the prime market for Jordanian products.

Jordanian trade fair in Baghdad remains open despite attacks

AMMAN (J.T.) — Despite U.S.-led strikes against Iraq, Jordan's second trade fair in Baghdad appears to be continuing in a business-as-usual mode, an official said Friday.

The second direct-sale fair was opened in Baghdad on Thursday and will stay open until Dec. 25," said Farouq Hadidi, director general of Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation.

Around 47 local companies are participating in the one-week fair, during which around 100 types of items will be on display, including furniture, perfume, clothes, cosmetics and other kinds of goods, he added.

But, Hadidi was unsure whether the attacks against Iraq would have a negative or positive impact on the fair's sales. "People might stop buying goods, or the show might be the first outlet for the Iraqi people after the air strikes are halted," Hadidi told the Jordan Times on Friday.

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sumption," he said. "We are well prepared."

On Thursday, Mulki signed two tenders for importing 60,000 tonnes of diesel oil and 40,000 tonnes of gas from the international market, which will be sufficient for 20 days.

The diesel shipment will arrive by Jan. 20, while the shipment of gas is due (Saturday)," Mulki said.

The Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company imports 11,500 tonnes of crude oil per day from Iraq in addition to other shipments of heavy fuel and liquefied gas.

The government also said Jordan has enough fuel to generate electricity continuously for 90 days.

Qadi said the border with Iraq remains open both ways to Arabs, non-Arabs and others who gave convincing reasons for their travel.

"The border is only closed to Iraqis and to those who cannot provide reasons for their travel to prevent a repeat of the situation eight years ago," he said.

Over a million foreigners, including Iraqis, fled to Jordan after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Most foreigners, including Asian and Egyptian workers, were stranded for weeks in makeshift camps along the frontiers, placing extra strains on Jordan's limited health, education

and food supply services before Western aid began to flow.

Jordan has been the main transit point for those travelling to and from Iraq since sanctions, slapped on Baghdad in 1990, stopped all flights in and out of the country.

Qadi said diplomats and journalists would be allowed to use the border in either direction, adding that the border would also be open to Iraqis who wanted to return to Iraq.

He said several Iraqi businesspersons with offices in Amman, an Iraqi sports team and others seeking medical treatment in Jordan were allowed entry into Jordan on Thursday.

He described the movement at the border as normal, and said there had been no attempted influx of refugees since the punitive strikes by the U.S. and Britain began.

However, officials have advised Jordanians not to cross the border for "security reasons."

He said Jordan was ready to forward any international and local relief aid to Baghdad and to offer humanitarian help in case the strikes continue for a prolonged period of time.

Qadi added that international relief groups will be forced to set up refugee camps on the Iraqi side of the border with Jordan.

Meanwhile, U.N. officials related to Ben Laden's declaration.

But fears that domestic anger over the U.S.-British strikes against Iraq, which began midnight on Wednesday, might lead to attacks on the embassy have also led to extra precautionary procedures, said the officials.

"We have reinforced protection around all embassies that might be under threat," said an official.

Along with American organisations in the country, Amman's already heavily-guarded U.S. embassy was closed down on Thursday and continues to be surrounded by barricades.

Extra police and security patrols are also posted outside the mission. An American embassy source said that it is still not clear whether the mission would be reopened on Sunday, following its customary two-day weekend.

According to an official, the timing of the embassy's security measures and the

said they expect around 10,000 Iraqis to move towards the border with Jordan if the allied military strikes on Iraq continue causing significant damage.

"The situation on the border is normal and calm, and all restrictions are meant to help us organise the situation," Qadi said, adding that Jordan is "ready to supply all humanitarian assistance to any refugees on the Iraqi side of the border."

According to earlier figures, over 100,000 Iraqis continue to live in Jordan, but no exact figure was available for those who hold residency and work permits.

Qadi also denied reports that the security authorities were preventing journalists from travelling to the Jordan-Iraq border.

"All journalists are allowed to go to the border and conduct their work," he said. Journalists are supposed to get a permit from the Information Ministry to visit the border.

Meanwhile, due to the air strikes, independent monitors checking humanitarian imports at Iraq's borders with Jordan and Syria and at the Gulf port of Basra had left their posts, said the chief U.N. humanitarian officer in Iraq, Hans von Sponeck.

But von Sponeck said those on the land borders had simply moved across

the border and had managed to carry out some of their work there, averting a complete halt to imports.

"Lloyds [monitors] have made an attempt to monitor from the other side of the borders," von Sponeck said.

Minister of Transportation Nasser Lawzi stressed that the military action against Iraq has not affected flights through Jordanian airspace.

"Our airspace remains open as normal. Some flights which were heading east but scheduled to fly through the Gulf airspace were delayed, and therefore, we changed the air corridor," added Lawzi.

As for the Kingdom's communications with Iraq, officials also confirmed that telephone lines between Jordan and Iraq were not affected by the air strikes.

Although Jordan took all necessary measures in light of the current situation in Iraq, officials said the Kingdom did not declare a state of emergency.

"Jordan is not in a state of emergency. We took all precautionary measures, and our forces have been put on a state of alert and readiness," Qadi said.

The government last month established a higher council for defence and an emergency committee which are responsible for dealing with any domestic emergency issue.

House committee says request to lift deputy's immunity 'incomplete'

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Lower House of Parliament Legal Committee, currently looking into an official request to lift the immunity of Deputy Ahmad Owaidi in preparation for a possible trial on charges of sexual assault, Friday said it did not have sufficient documentation to look into the case.

Committee Speaker Mahmoud Kharabsheh told the

Jordan Times on Friday that documents specifying the location and the date of the crime as well as other related information should have been supplied with the request, which he described as "incomplete" at present.

The prosecutor general at the Criminal Court sent the immunity waiver request to House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali on Tuesday. If Parliament agrees to lift Abadi's immunity, he could face charges of sexual

assault, violating the plaintiff's chastity and destroying marital relations.

According to House regulations, cases concerning immunity of deputies are referred to the Legal Committee, which reviews them and issues its recommendations to the House in a period not to exceed two weeks.

Kharabsheh said the committee, which held its first meeting on Thursday, discussed the mechanism it

will follow in studying the case. Since 1989, the House has never lifted the immunity of any deputy. It turned down two similar requests involving former deputies Yagoub Qarash and Jamal Khreishah during the 11th and 12th parliaments, respectively.

The committee will study the case further Monday morning, when the relevant documents are expected to reach the committee.

Study on domestic violence calls for national centre for women victims

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — A study on violence against women in Jordan has called for the establishment of a national centre for victims of domestic violence.

The study, which revealed that "crimes of honour" still constitute the highest percentage of premeditated murders in Jordan, recommended encouraging research to explore the underlying motives of physical and sexual violence committed against women in the family and society at large.

The government is currently studying plans to establish the country's first women's shelter to house battered women and those whose lives are threatened by their family members for reasons of "honour."

Annually, between 25 to 30 women are killed in Jordan in "honour crimes," according to official figures.

This type of murder is carried out by male relatives of women suspected of engaging in "immoral behaviour."

The study, released on Thursday, also called for training criminal justice professionals on means of dealing with various forms of violence, urged educational authorities to reinforce the value of equality and mutual respect between the sexes and asked the government to produce gender-desegregated data.

The 19-month field study, "Violence Against Women in Jordan: Demographic Characteristics of Perpetrators and Victims," which was conducted by the Human Forum for Women's Rights, aimed at identifying the magnitude of violence against women in Jordan, the demographic characteristics of perpetrators and victims, and official procedures to dealing with the phenomenon.

The study sample included 590 women over 18 years of age, 108 male inmates at correctional facilities and 40 professionals in the criminal justice field.

According to the forum's president, Lamin Nasser, there are clear indications of social pressure that prevents women from enjoying their constitutional and legal rights to protection from physical and sexual assault.

She added that the results indicated that a high percentage of perpetrators of violence, especially ones who committed "crimes of honour," had criminal records, and that violent crimes against women were not limited to a specific category or social stratum, but were found to transcend all socio-economic levels in society.

HRH Princess Basma, who presided over the presentation of the study, stressed the importance of conducting such research

and emphasised the need to carry out similar work in the future to serve all sectors of society.

"Such studies that are based on scientific and practical methods have many positive aspects on society and its development in all arenas, especially in raising awareness about the issue of violence against women in the Jordanian society," the Princess told the gathering.

The study received technical and financial support from the Western Asia Regional Office of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the World Health Organisation. Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

The event, part of a regional UNIFEM campaign for the elimination of violence against women, was the final campaign activity in Jordan.

U.S. embassy in Amman beefs up security

By Alia A. Toukan

AMMAN — The U.S. embassy in Amman, along with other American missions in the Middle East and Africa, has beefed up security measures in response to possible terrorist actions, Jordanian officials said Friday.

"Security warnings had been in place throughout the region before the [U.S.-British] strikes on Iraq," an official told the Jordan Times yesterday.

According to another official, U.S. missions in the area had requested additional security measures from their host countries following the bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in August.

Osama Ben Laden, the Islamist Saudi billionaire alleged to have masterminded and financed the Africa bombings, has declared a "boly war" on the U.S. and its missions abroad. It is not yet clear if the security threat was

related to Ben Laden's declaration. But fears that domestic anger over the U.S.-British strikes against Iraq, which began midnight on Wednesday, might lead to attacks on the embassy have also led to extra precautionary procedures, said the officials.

"We have reinforced protection around all embassies that might be under threat," said an official.

Along with American organisations in the country, Amman's already heavily-guarded U.S. embassy was closed down on Thursday and continues to be surrounded by barricades.

Extra police and security patrols are also posted outside the mission. An American embassy source said that it is still not clear whether the mission would be reopened on Sunday, following its customary two-day weekend.

According to an official, the timing of the embassy's security measures and the

strikes against Iraq are "purely coincidental." The additional security arrangements are likely to remain after the attack on Iraq is halted.

A Dec. 16 posting on Jordan's U.S. embassy site on the Internet, however, warns American citizens in the Kingdom to take "prudent personal security measures."

"Given the general situation in the region, all U.S. citizens in Jordan should be especially cautious and aware of their surroundings at this time," read the posting.

"Although we know of no specific threats against the private American citizen community in Jordan, the embassy strongly recommends that U.S. citizens continue to take prudent personal security measures during this period," continued the posting.

For its part, the British mission has not closed down, and security outside the compound appears to be unchanged. An embassy

employee contacted by the Jordan Times declined to comment on whether additional security arrangements had been undertaken.

Both the American and British embassies, as well as other missions contacted, have said that they are urging their citizens in the Kingdom to be cautious and to let them know of their whereabouts, but are not advising their nationals not to visit Jordan at this time.

Israel's mission in Amman, always heavily guarded by Israeli security personnel, has not taken any additional precautions but has witnessed tightened security by the Jordanian authorities, said an embassy source. However, he said, Jordan on Thursday closed its two border crossings with Israel that permit the entry of Israeli nationals.

Information Minister Nasser Judeh denied the crossings have been closed, but said extra security precautions have been taken on the border points.

During regional awareness campaign on domestic violence

Students urge government to enforce laws to protect women from violence

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — Students, taking their cue from the country's first nationwide campaign on violence against women, have urged the government to enforce laws that safeguard women from possible abuse.

More than 100 students attending an awards ceremony held by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), also urged the government on Thursday to raise popular awareness on the issue by introducing it in school curricula.

Educationalists and sociologists attending the event said they were surprised by the students' progressive reaction, apparently prompted by UNIFEM's regional campaign, "A Life Free of Violence: It is our Right," which was launched by HRH Princess Basma on Nov. 22.

"We are calling on the Ministry [of Education] to include a weekly cultural class to educate both male and female stu-

dents about violence against women in our society," a 15-year-old student told the gathering.

The campaign activities in Jordan comprised essay and drawing competitions on domestic violence for students and student councils at government and private schools in the Kingdom, in addition to other events, which included a public march, a symposium on violence against women and a roundtable to launch a recent study on violence against women. (See separate story)

Addressing the students, Princess Basma said: "It is important that you be our partners in changing negative trends to positive ones."

She expressed appreciation to UNIFEM, the Ministry of Education and the student councils for their "important and vital role in shedding light on such an important and sensitive issue."

The student councils discussed the four winning topics during Thursday's event, which touched on the cam-

paign's theme, the effect of violence against women and means of dealing with it, and discussed a case that took place in the students' surroundings.

"I prepared a paper on the campaign's theme to defend it, because it is a human issue," said 12-year-old Najwa Obeidat, a student council member at the North Um Al Sumaq school.

In her paper, Obeidat, a sixth-grader, referred to the ancient days when new-born girls used to be buried by their fathers, until Islam came and gave women equality.

But she asked in her paper: "Why do people now practise more heinous violence such as threats, killing in the name of honour, family pressures and harm just because we are women? It is said that we are the weaker side, although we are the more productive part," she said.

"I call on you men... fathers, brothers and husbands, let females and women live under the shadow of your love and do not implant hatred and vio-

lence in your children and grandchildren by practising violence against your mothers, wives and sisters," Obeidat said.

Following the conclusion of the event, Princess Basma distributed prizes to more than 40 winning students who participated in the competitions. She later opened a drawing exhibition by students reflecting forms of violence against women.

The event commemorates the adoption of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fifth anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights with its historic recognition of "Women's Rights are Human Rights."

Four Arab countries, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen, also held similar activities in their countries, which aimed at raising public awareness on the various forms of violence against women, such as domestic violence, crimes of honour, legal violence, female circumcision and others.

What's going on

THE NIGHTS OF RAMADAN FESTIVAL
* French film "Riens du tout" (sponsored by the French Cultural Centre) at Cinema Philadelphia at 8:00 p.m.
* French film "Western" (sponsored by the French Cultural Centre) at Cinema Philadelphia on Sunday Dec. 20 at 8:00 p.m.
EXHIBITIONS
* Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Sudanese artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Jan. 25.
* Exhibition of Nabataean silver jewelry at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, off Wadi Saqra Street, until Dec. 31 (Tel. 5699141/2).
* "The Warm Winter" — works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until Feb. 1.
* The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.
CONCERT
* Musical performance by the concert band of the National Music Conservatory, with conductor Barbara Johnson, at Terra Sancta Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

Protestant armed group begins disarmament

BELFAST (AFP) — A Protestant armed group in Northern Ireland became the first paramilitary to begin disarmament Friday, hours after a breakthrough in the implementation of the province's April peace deal.

The Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF), which has been involved in a string of sectarian murders, delivered the guns, bombs and detonators to the international commission on disarmament in Belfast.

The weapons were transported to the commission's headquarters under police escort from Portadown, a Protestant stronghold town southwest of the city.

In all four submachine guns, two pistols, two rifles, one sawn-off shotgun, two pipe bombs and accompanying detonators were handed in together with 350 rounds of gun ammunition and 24 shotgun cartridges.

Under the conditions of the disarmament, the weapons were ground down or sawn up without being tested to discover if, how and where they have been used.

Eyes immediately turned to other paramilitaries, particularly the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which has the largest arsenal in Northern Ireland and earlier this month refused to begin weapons handovers.

Under the April 10 peace deal all weapons are to be handed over within two years.

Until now, a refusal by paramilitaries to begin disarmament has been the biggest block in the peace process.

Pro-British rule unionists have refused to convene Northern Ireland's new government and sit round a

table with Sinn Fein unless the IRA, its armed wing, at least starts decommissioning weapons.

Sinn Fein dismisses any talk of its seats in government being conditional on anything except popular support.

Prime Minister Tony Blair welcomed the LVF's move. "It's clearly very welcome," his official spokesman said.

Canadian General John De Chastelain, who heads the disarmament body, said the handover was "modest but significant".

"What effect that will have on other paramilitary groups is up to them. Paramilitary groups themselves will decide when they wish to hand over their weapons."

The LVF's go-between, pastor Kenny McClinton, who helped arrange Friday's handovers, said: "The fact that the LVF has taken this first step has led the way ... (it) is proof positive that the decommission process in Northern Ireland can and will work."

Before the handover was confirmed, British Secretary for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam said: "Of course they can build them up again the next day."

"But if they hand in some weapons, that's a start and that may well kickstart others to do it."

The LVF was formed in 1996 in protest at a lack of armed Protestant response to the IRA's resumption of violence in February that year.

It became known as the most ruthless and sectarian of the Protestant paramilitary groups under the leadership of Billy Wright.

It was held responsible for the murders of two Roman

Catholic and Protestant friends earlier this year and for shooting dead a Catholic teenager as she lay in bed in her Protestant boyfriend's home.

The move came hours after an agreement was reached by the province's political leaders on the structure of the new semi-autonomous government. Unionists and pro-united Ireland nationalist negotiators agreed there should be 10 government departments and six cross-border bodies.

The deal, a significant breakthrough in the implementation of the historic April 10 peace deal which has been largely stalled for six months, was sealed after 18 hours of talks at Stormont, outside Belfast.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair broke away from the Iraq crisis to negotiate with party leaders by telephone.

The shadow government is to be given full powers in February or March.

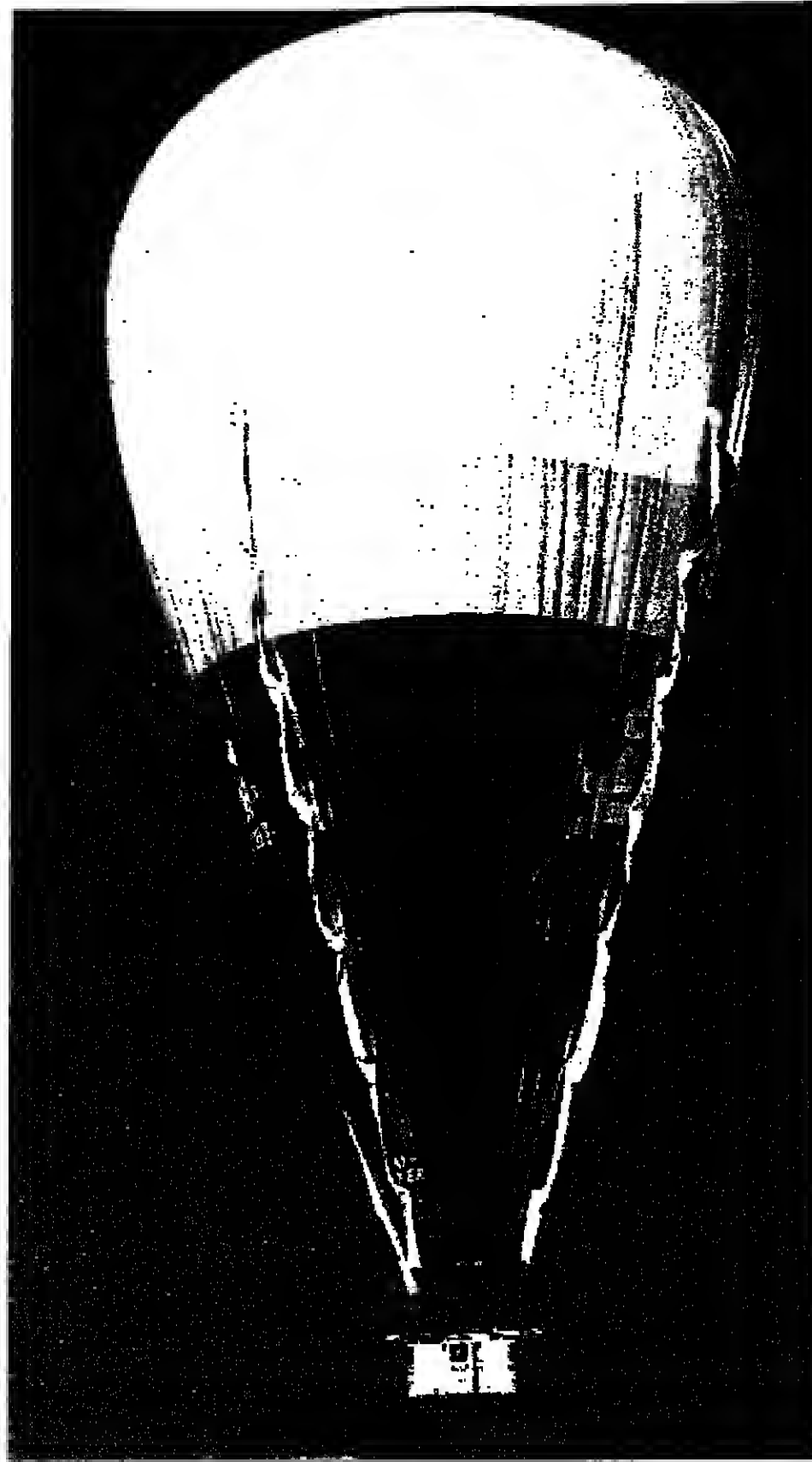
The agreement settle a number of different issues which have plagued the peace process.

First the number of ministries caused argument because it will determine how many cabinet seats go to Sinn Fein, political wing of IRA.

With 10 ministries, the strength of its popular vote means Sinn Fein will have two ministers.

The cross-border bodies are also a crucial element of the peace deal as they give the Irish government a say in the north's affairs for the first time, a key agreement demanded by nationalists.

They will also be formed next year and have authority in areas such as tourism and transport.



The balloon carrying British tycoon Richard Branson and his former archrival U.S. Steve Fossett lifts off from Marrakesh in an attempt to fly non-stop around the world (Reuters photo)

Branson, Fossett balloon begins record bid

MARRAKESH, Morocco (R) — A balloon carrying British entrepreneur Richard Branson and his former American archrival Steve Fossett in a bid to fly non-stop around the world lifted off in clear blue skies Friday.

A huge crowd, including Branson's family, gave the three-member crew a colourful send-off, complete with traditional Moroccan music. Men on camels and horses circled the giant white balloon as it lifted off from a Moroccan military air base near Marrakesh.

Branson and Fossett, who linked-up to launch their record-breaking round-the-world balloon bid after several failed attempts with separate teams, were forced to postpone a lift-off on Dec. 4 because of wet weather. The two adventurers were joined by copilot Per Lindstrand of Sweden.

"The lift-off at 9.23 am (0923 GMT) was perfect with no last minute prob-

lems," said Michael Kendrick, project manager of the British ICO satellite communications company which is sponsoring the event.

"The balloon will hover above Marrakesh (southern Morocco) for around five hours before drifting eastwards towards Algeria," he told Reuters.

The take-off was slightly delayed because "Branson forgot his toothbrush at the hotel," said Dave Partridge of ICO.

Thursday, Kendrick said that the adventurers were determined to make it this time.

"Now we have the best weather system. Both Branson and Fossett are very excited about it," he said.

Their route will cross over 20 countries, including Algeria, Libya, northern Iraq, Iran, India and Japan.

"They are passing over northern Iraq because this is where the wind will take them," Kendrick said when asked whether the

adventurers were concerned about the U.S. and British air raids that began against Iraq Wednesday night.

"We expect the trip to last 10 to 14 days and project it to land in Northern Europe," he added.

Virgin Group chief Branson's team failed to get off the ground a year ago when wind ripped their balloon from its mooring just few hours before the launch from the same military base.

The rogue balloon was later recovered, slightly damaged, in the Algerian desert. Fossett almost died last August when his balloon was caught in a thunderstorm and plunged 8,840 metres into the South Pacific.

Kendrick said the three-member team would celebrate Christmas in the air.

"They've got a little Xmas tree with some decorations, crackers and lots of water," he added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pope has flu, cancels meetings

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — Pope John Paul II cancelled all meetings scheduled for Friday after falling ill with influenza, his spokesman Joaquin Navarro said. "The Holy Father will not hold any of the planned audiences because of slight influenza," he said in a communiqué. The Vatican refused to comment Monday on the Pope's health following a report in the U.S. magazine Newsweek which said he would soon no longer be well enough to preside at public masses. The Vatican has never recognised officially that the Pontiff, who will be 79 in May, has Parkinson's disease. Neither will officials discuss the issue of how long the Pope can continue with his work. The Pope is understood to be determined to preside over the Roman Catholic Church's ambitious plans to celebrate the millennium.

Polish legislators override presidential veto on secret files bill

WARSAW (AP) — Polish legislators voted Friday to override President Aleksander Kwasniewski's veto of a bill that would allow victims of Communist-era repression to see their secret police files. Kwasniewski's lawyer said later the president would sign the measure Friday afternoon. Legislators in the Sejm, the lower chamber of parliament, stood and applauded after the 282-164 vote that overturned the president's Dec. 12 veto. The vote was a major victory for the governing coalition of parties linked to the Solidarity movement that toppled Communism in 1989 over Kwasniewski, a former Communist.

Georgia warns Abkhazians against attack on civilians

TBILISI, Georgia (AP) — Georgia accused leaders of the breakaway province of Abkhazia Friday of planning to use force against ethnic Georgian civilians and threatened to respond with military action. "The Georgian authorities will not allow another bloody crackdown on the civilian population," the government said in a statement released to the media. It accused the separatist authorities of concentrating troops near Georgian-populated villages in Abkhazia's Gali region in a bid to drive their residents out of the lush Black Sea province. The Georgian interior and security ministries said they had put their forces on alert near Abkhazia, ordering them to intervene and protect civilians in case of Abkhazian attack. Abkhazian authorities have acknowledged sending additional forces to the Georgian-populated areas, saying the move is intended to fight "Georgian terrorist groups." Pro-Georgian militants have often attacked Abkhazian separatist forces in the province. Abkhazia drove out Georgian government troops during its 1992-1993 war for independence and has run its own affairs since then, balking at return of more than 300,000 ethnic Georgian refugees. The province has remained restive, plagued by frequent clashes despite the presence of Russian peacekeepers who have monitored a truce since 1994. Several tens of thousands of refugees have returned to the province despite Abkhazian resistance, but were forced to flee again in May when Abkhazian forces attacked their villages. Some came back when the fighting ended, and about 10,000 ethnic Georgians are now living in the province.

Amphetamines, cocaine use rise in EU, report says

LISBON (R) — Amphetamine and cocaine use is rising in Europe, but the rate of new AIDS cases is falling sharply due to new treatments which delay the progression of the disease, a report on drug problems in the European Union said Friday. "Amphetamines (use) is continuing to rise, and is likely to be more significant in future than Ecstasy," said the 1998 annual report of the Lisbon-based European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). It said use of Ecstasy, a drug commonly used in dance clubs, was no longer rising in member states where it appeared first and prevalence was higher but was still rising in other countries. There was a modest but steady rise in cocaine use, although prevalence remained low, the report said, while heroin use was increasing among some synthetic drug users. It said drug use was spreading from cities to small towns and rural areas in some member states. The EMCDDA said rates of new AIDS cases were strongly declining as a result of treatments which delayed the progression of the illness, but earlier extreme optimism about these treatments had been tempered recently. "As a consequence, AIDS reporting is becoming more an indicator of treatment uptake and less an indicator of HIV infection," the report said. The report said prevalence of HIV infection was stable or declining in most EU countries.

China's capital bans coal to stamp out pollution

BEIJING (R) — China's capital Beijing Friday banned the burning of coal and introduced new automobile emission standards as part of a sweeping plan to stamp out pollution, state media said. Most buildings in Beijing are heated by coal-powered stoves, which pump out choking pollution and put the city near the top of a World Bank list of the world's most polluted urban areas. Vice Mayor Wang Guangtao said the 19-point programme, which also included measures to cut air-borne dust created by rampant construction, would clean up Beijing's skies by the turn of the century. "All boilers within the city centre should now use clean fuel, such as natural gas or liquefied petroleum gas," the official Xinhua news agency quoted Wang as saying. During the winter, coal boilers produce 90 per cent of the city's sulphur dioxide pollution, 50 per cent of the nitrogen oxide pollution and 40 per cent of all suspended particles in the air, Xinhua said. Under the new regulations, organisations using large boilers would be ordered to change fuel to low-sulphur coal, which produces less smoke and sulphur dioxide. The rules would ban construction of new coal-burning facilities and mandate the import of natural gas from China's northern provinces of Shaanxi, Gansu and Ningxia to meet energy needs. The plan also set strict new regulations governing vehicle emissions which aimed to reduce nitrogen oxide pollution by 80 per cent. Wang told the state-run China Daily. He added that all building sites would be walled off to limit the spread of dust from construction. "By using tough measures, the municipal government plans to improve the city's environment by next year and even more so by the year 2000," Wang said.

Police say 11 dead in Siberian bus explosion

MOSCOW (AP) — A bus exploded in central Siberia, killing at least 11 people, police investigating the incident said Friday. Police did not know how many people were on the bus, but had confirmed there were no survivors, according to the Interfax News Agency. Investigators speculate that a faulty fuel cylinder in the bus caused the explosion, which occurred as it passed a gas station in Kiselevsk, about 3,000 kilometres east of Moscow. Still, police are still searching for possible evidence of a criminal act, and offered a 50,000 ruble (\$2,300) reward for significant evidence, the report said.

Albanian-language daily closes after warning

PRISTINA, Serbia (R) — The oldest Albanian-language newspaper in Kosovo, Bujku, did not publish Friday after the Serbian government warned it and other newspapers to stop printing articles promoting "intolerance".

Albanian-language media sources said Bujku was shut down after receiving a warning from the Serbian Information Ministry Thursday afternoon.

They said electricity was cut off at the printing plant and the newspapers' main offices. No one answered the phone at the Bujku office in Pristina.

The other daily newspaper warned by the Serbian Information Ministry, Koha Ditore, published Friday and the editor said the daily would continue as long as it could.

The newspaper carried a front-page copy of the letter and an article inside describing the contents of the Information Ministry's warning.

Several newspaper vendors, both Serb and Albanian, did not display the newspaper Friday and only took a copy out from under their counters when it was specifically

requested. Veton Surroi, editor in chief of Koha Ditore, told Reuters the paper would not change its editorial policy as demanded by Information Minister Aleksandar Vucic.

"We will continue as long as we can. But if they fine us a million dinars there is no way we can continue working," he said.

Serbia passed an Information Law in October envisaging huge fines for articles deemed to threaten constitutional order.

Introduced as NATO threatened air strikes against the country over a Serbian crackdown in Kosovo, it has already muzzled several Belgrade-based newspapers critical of the government.

Vucic said in a warning letter sent to the two dailies and three other newspapers — one of which never received permission to publish and two which have stopped publication — that they should rethink their editorial policies.

"After analysing the articles printed in your newspaper we find you are calling for the constitutional rule and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to be

destroyed," said the letter, obtained by Reuters.

It also accused the papers of trying to incite national race and religious intolerance.

"So we warn you that you are obliged to immediately change your editorial policies according to the law... otherwise we will be forced to take appropriate measures," the letter said.

Surroi said the measures involved court hearings and fines.

The third Albanian-language daily newspaper in Kosovo, Kosova Sot, did not receive a warning letter, sources at the paper said Thursday.

Ethnic Albanians make up about 90 per cent of the population in the southern province. Most would like to see split from Serbia after 10 years of harsh direct rule by Belgrade.

More than 1,500 people have been killed and 250,000 left homeless amid fierce fighting this year between ethnic Albanian and Yugoslav security forces.

A fragile ceasefire is being tested with at least 45 people killed in shootings and clashes this week.

Students demonstrate, security tight in parts of Indonesian capital

JAKARTA (AP) — About 1,200 Indonesian students Friday staged anti-government rallies as troops blocked roads near the presidential palace and other strategic sites in the wake of a clash between protesters and security officers.

Extra police were also deployed near the U.S. Embassy amid fears of demonstrations in the predominantly Muslim South East Asian country against the U.S. missile

strikes on Iraq. Twenty activists from an Islamic student group rallied against the bombing outside the Jakarta headquarters of the United Nations.

Separately, several hundred students marched from a campus of the state-run University of Indonesia towards Parliament. They chanted anti-military slogans and some carried bamboo staves.

Other groups of pro-democracy protesters drove through the city

in buses and gathered at a park and a main intersection.

Thursday, at least 4,000 students singing "revolution until we die" attempted to storm the Parliament building.

Hundreds were injured when police and soldiers stopped them with plastic bullets, batons and tear gas.

The huge street battle came just hours after Indonesian President B.J. Habibie warned that the protests could

lead to the breakup of the sprawling nation, the world's fourth most populous country.

Friday, Habibie repeated his warning and urged Indonesians to exercise restraint.

"We still see many cruel actions," the official Antara news agency quoted him as saying at the state palace. "We still see how differences in opinion could lead to conflict involving the masses." Indonesia is grappling with its

worst economic turmoil in decades and has been plagued by political uncertainty as well.

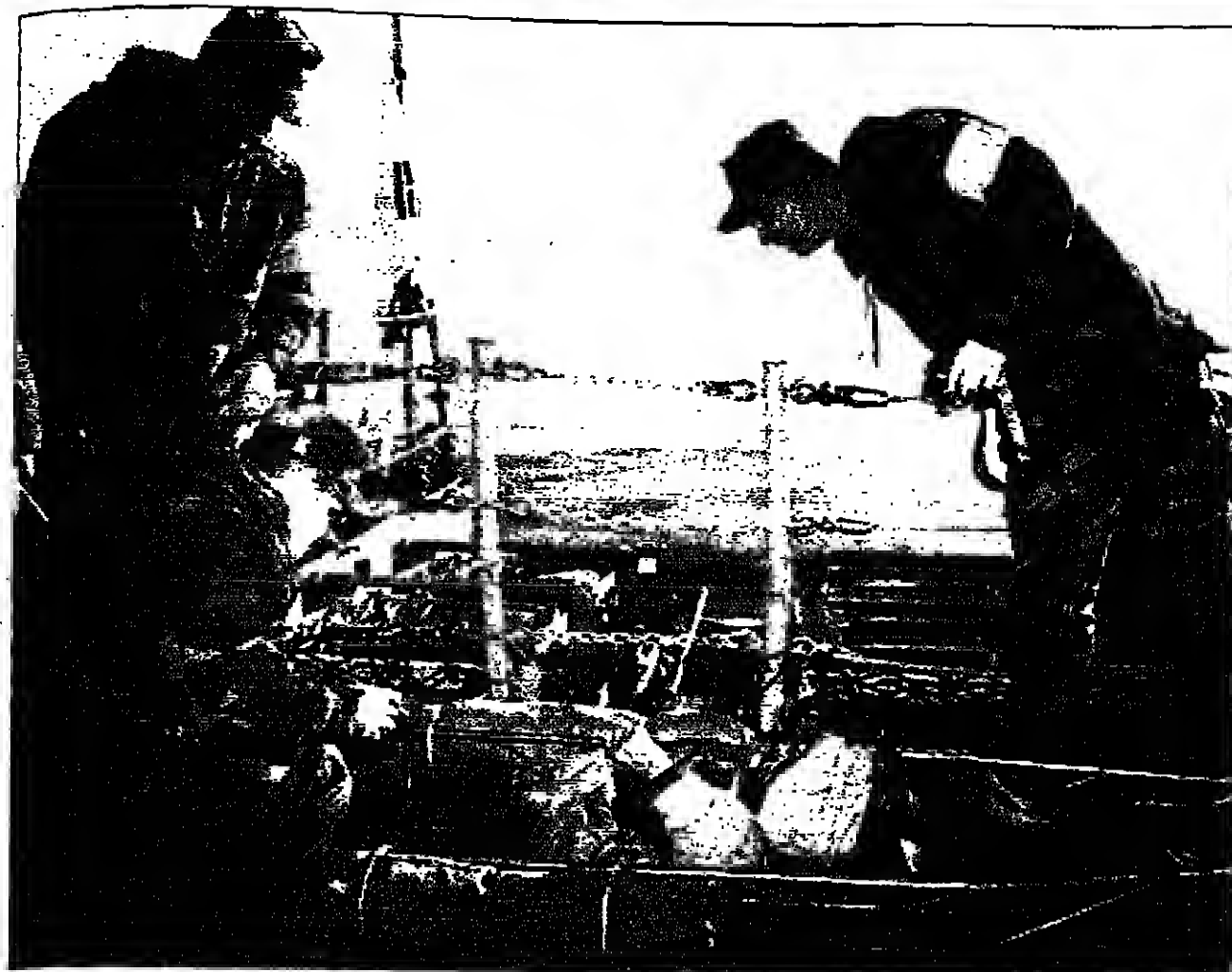
Habibie took over in May from authoritarian President Suharto, who was dislodged by riots and protests against his 32-year rule.

Yet students have kept up their protests since Suharto's ouster, demanding that Habibie force the powerful military out of politics and put his predecessor and one-

time mentor on trial for corruption.

Nine students were killed Nov. 13 in clashes with security forces during a government assembly that met to plan an overhaul of Suharto's rigid political system. Students said the reforms did not go far enough.

Habibie has allowed political parties to form and has scheduled parliamentary elections next year. He also has ordered an investigation into Suharto's wealth.



United Nations Military Armistices Commission officers check the body of a North Korean frogman in the military port of Jinhae, South Korea. South Korean naval forces sank a North Korean submarine vessel in a predawn fire-fight deep in southern territory Friday after which the body of an armed North Korean frogman was found (Reuters photo)

South Korea says it sank a North Korean infiltration boat

SEOUL (AP) — South Korean navy ships and planes chased and sank a North Korean speedboat in a gun battle Friday and began a sea and air search for its suspected mother ship.

The body of a North Korean in a wet suit was recovered shortly after the sinking of the vessel, described as a low-slung, high-speed boat used to land or pick up spies.

"We're now involved in reconnaissance operations to pursue the mother ship, which is believed to be outside South Korean territorial waters," Lt. Gen. Chung Young-Jin said.

The office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had earlier described the sunken ship as a mini-submarine of a type commonly used by North Korea for espionage missions.

But Chung, commander of the Joint Chiefs' Operations Headquarters, told a news conference it was a speedboat capable of carrying up to eight people.

The craft was first spotted shortly before midnight Thursday as it approached Yosu, a small port 320 kilo-

metres south of Seoul on the tip of the Korean Peninsula, he said.

The boat then fled south-east for about 100 kilometres, pursued for nearly six hours by South Korean navy ships and air force planes, Chung said.

Finally hemmed in and illuminated by nearly 100 flares dropped by a South Korean transport plane, the fleeing boat opened fire at the pursuing ships and was quickly sunk by return fire, Chung said.

"We fired several warning shots, but the enemy craft continued to flee and fired at us. Therefore, we attacked and sank it," said Col. Hwang Dong-Kyu, a Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesman.

About two hours later, South Korean troops recovered the body of the North Korean, Chung said. Four men had been sighted on the boat, and Navy frogmen were searching for more bodies.

There were no South Korean casualties.

The speedboat is believed to have been dispatched to infiltrate agents into the South, pick up

agents stationed in the South, or establish secret, espionage-related drop-off points," Chung said.

He said it was believed to have been launched by a mother ship weighing 70 to 100 tons, sailing out of the port of Nanpo on North Korea's west coast.

On shore, South Korean soldiers and police were put on high alert, increasing security checks for possible infiltrators from the boat, officials said.

Chief presidential spokesman Park Jie-Won praised the swift military action and urged North Korea to stop armed provocations to promote peace on the peninsula.

In Washington, U.S. National Security Council spokesman P.J. Crowley called the intrusion a "very serious matter." North Korea routinely uses submarines to drop off or pick up spies along South Korea's long coastline, officials said.

Several have been detected in recent years.

In June, a 70-tonne Yugoslav Class North Korean submarine was found in South Korean waters off the east

coast with its propeller and periscope tangled in a fishing net.

South Koreans later cut through the hatch with welding torches and found nine bodies, all shot dead in an apparent suicide pact, Seoul officials said the sub was on a spy mission.

The latest incident comes as the United States is trying to defuse tension over a suspected North Korean nuclear weapons site. North Korea has rejected a U.S. demand for its inspection.

North Korea claims that the facility under construction at Keumjang-Ri north of the country's capital, Pyongyang, is for civilian use, but U.S. officials suspect it to be nuclear-related.

North Korea's military has denounced the U.S. demand for inspection as "a declaration of war." About 37,000 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea under a mutual defence treaty.

The Koreans were divided into the Communist North and the capitalist South in 1945. They are still technically at war, because the 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty.

India's Sonia Gandhi fires up Congress party

NEW DELHI (R) — India's Sonia Gandhi Friday fired up her 113-year-old Congress party, urging party members to move forward and repair the damage done by the nine-month-old Hindu nationalist-led coalition government.

The Italian-born head of India's oldest party also moved to overhaul the Congress structure, setting aside a third of party positions for women, a fifth for backward and minority communities and an independent authority to hold inner-party elections.

Delegates at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee, fresh from a triumphant showing in state elections last month, showered praise and garlands on Sonia for putting the party

back on its feet after losses in two successive national elections.

"Long live Sonia... next year you will be prime minister," Congressmen gathered inside an indoor stadium for the party conclave shouted as Sonia slammed Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's shaky coalition.

"In just eight months our diplomacy and foreign policy is in a shambles," Sonia said, referring to the coalition government's decision to go down the nuclear road.

"The country has paid a heavy price for dismantling the foreign policy consensus, tried and tested friends have moved away," she said.

India's nuclear tests in May, followed by a similar campaign by arch-rival Pakistan,

drew global outrage and brought sanctions by the United States and other countries on both.

A Congress government conducted India's first nuclear explosion in 1974. The party has said it applauded scientists for carrying out the range of nuclear tests in May, but it was committed to the country's traditional policy of seeking universal disarmament.

Sonia counselled restraint and said her party favoured setting up a government of its own rather than entering into a coalition arrangement.

"We must stand on our own, aim to provide a stable government of our own, the events of the past few months show that people are tired of a fractious coalition," she said. Vajpayee's minority coalition

has been under pressure ever since his Bharatiya Janata Party was humiliated in state elections in three key states last month.

"This is the beginning of a long journey, we must strengthen the party from the grassroots," Sonia said.

The Congress leader said Vajpayee's coalition was riven by dissent and had failed on the economy, law and order, and was intolerant.

"Prices are rising, unemployment is rising, all this leads to an ominous situation," she said.

Half the districts of India were prone to terrorism, but there had been no attempt by the government to address the problems of the disaffected, she said.

South Korea bans funding for human cloning research

SEOUL (AP) — South Korea banned funding for research into human cloning Friday, but admitted it can not stop "maverick doctors" from forging ahead with the controversial procedure.

The move came after a medical team at Seoul's Kyonghee University announced earlier this week that it had successfully cloned a human embryo in its initial stage of development.

The announcement caught the government off guard and sparked protest rallies. In downtown Seoul, 20 civic activists shook signs Friday and demanded a ban on human cloning research.

One sign carried by a demonstrator depicted a row of identical mug shots and asked: "Which one is the real Me?"

"We were not given any prior information about" the

experiment by the Kyonghee University doctors, said Kim Ho-Sung, an official at the Science and Technology Ministry. "Our position is firm and clear: There will be no funding for any such research."

But Kim added the government planned no legal action against the scientists.

"There will always be maverick scientists. We cannot do anything to stop them," he said. "They will be few in number and you do not burn down the whole house to kill a few fleas."

At the National Assembly, legislators prepared to pass a new law next month banning research on human cloning except for research on cancer or other diseases.

"The law will not punish anybody but will have a strong warning effect on the few scientists who are inter-

ested in cloning research," said Rep. Rhee Shung-Hi, who spearheaded the legislation.

But civic organisations charged the legislation would do nothing to stop human cloning research because it does not call for penalties and provides no clear dividing line between cloning research and similar scientific work.

"We must stop scientists seeking commercial benefits and cheap heroism, like those at Kyonghee University," 20 civic groups said in a joint statement.

Dr. Lee Bo-Yeon, a professor at the fertility clinic of Kyonghee University Hospital, said he conducted the experiment to help infertile patients and said cloning human embryos should be encouraged to create replacement organs.

But he said he would not

conduct further experiments until legal and ethical disputes were resolved.

Lee's team replaced the nucleus of a woman's egg with the nucleus of one of her body cells, transferring her DNA to the egg.

The team then cultivated the egg until it grew into four cells, an early embryonic stage.

American cloning experts said it was the first time they knew of that human DNA had been transferred from a body cell into a human egg, with the egg then developing into embryonic cells.

Body cells, as opposed to eggs or sperm, contain the full complement of a person's DNA.

But they added the experiment was stopped too early to determine whether it would grow into a viable embryo, much less a human foetus.

Spain acts to kick-start Basque peace process

MADRID (AFP) — Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar is to have jailed members of the Basque separatist organisation ETA moved to prisons nearer home in a bid to kick-start the peace process, the interior ministry said Friday.

The ministry said 21 ETA prisoners held on the Canary and Balearic islands and in Spain's north African

enclaves would be moved to jails on the Spanish mainland before Christmas, but not to the Basque country. Observers say the move is a peace gesture by the government after ETA — a Basque-language acronym for Basque Homeland and Freedom — called a ceasefire on Sept. 16.

However the organisation is demanding that all 530 ETA prisoners held

throughout the country be moved to jails in the Basque country of northern Spain as one of the preconditions for a permanent peace settlement.

Since ETA announced its truce, the Basque region has seen its longest period of peace in 30 years, however the peace process is bogged down amid suspicion on both sides.

Around 800 people have

been killed in ETA's campaign of violence for a Basque homeland since 1968.

The government earlier announced it was moving four ETA prisoners into a Basque country jail and releasing another inmate early for health reasons. ETA said that gesture was not enough to further the peace process.

Kosovo truce appears unravelling

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AP) — The body of a prominent Serbian official was found early Friday, just hours after he was kidnapped, apparently by Kosovo Albanian guerrillas, Serb sources reported.

The body of Zvonko Bojanic, the district mayor of Kosovo Polje, a town just 5 kilometres west of the provincial capital Pristina, was found by the province's main east-west road, the Serb-run Media Centre said.

The report did not say who found the body but cited the Serb official's family who witnessed Bojanic's abduction Thursday night from his home in a nearby village by five masked rebels in guerrilla uniforms.

Although the circumstances of the death remained unclear and there was no independent confirmation of the report, it came just hours after Kosovo's ethnic

Albanian rebels vowed revenge for the killing of 36 guerrilla fighters in a border clash this weekend.

Thursday, Serb police launched a strong crackdown on a suspected rebel-controlled village, reportedly killing two ethnic Albanian fighters and capturing 34 in a day-long battle.

Serb authorities said they raided the village of Glodjane in search of gunmen who slaughtered six young Serbs, including four teenagers, Monday in a bar in Pec, 75 kilometres west of Pristina.

Police also sealed off a north-western district of Pec as part of the sweep. An armoured personnel carrier and police officers wearing flak jackets blocked a bridge leading to the Kapesnica district. Police snipers looked down from surrounding rooftops.

American engineer, pilot die in plane crash in Philippines

DAET, Philippines (AP) — A twin-engine plane crashed into a mountain in bad weather, killing the pilot and an American engineer on board, police said Friday.

Police Superintendent Rogelio Granada said villagers found the six-seater Beechcraft 95 half buried in mud late Thursday in Mabini, a mountain village on the outskirts of Daet town in Camarines del Norte province.

Granada said the villagers began searching for the plane after seeing it plunge into a mountain a day earlier. He said the pilot may have lost his way in the heavy rain and strong winds.

Granada said villagers found the decapitated remains of two people, including the Filipino pilot and his passenger, who was later identified by U.S. embassy authorities in Manila as Mark Matrigali of Florida. No other details were immediately available.

Other identification documents were lost or stolen by local villagers, Granada added.

Police in Daet earlier said Matrigali was from Melbourne, Australia, but this was later denied by the Australian embassy in Manila. Daet is about 220 kilometres east of Manila.

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Departure: Gaza International 4:00 p.m.
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Jordan's family planning strategy as the most outstanding of its type in Asia and the Near East. The sentence should have read that Washington rated the strategy as the most outstanding in the two regions.

PNA contains pro-Iraq protests

BETHLEHEM (AP) — Mindful of the recent blossoming in relations with the United States, Palestinian authorities moved Friday to contain protests against the bombing of Iraq.

Protesters throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip gathered after Friday prayers to protest the joint U.S.-British airstrikes on Iraq.

The largest turnout was in Nablus, where thousands marched through the city chanting "America is under our feet" and "Britain is an enemy of God." The airstrikes began late Wednesday night after a United Nations report concluded that Iraq was not cooperating with inspectors seeking to contain its

weapons-of-mass-destruction capability.

The Nablus protesters shouted slogans against the recent Palestinian-U.S. rapprochement.

Some marchers shook their fists in the air when they saw Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's helicopter approach.

Most protesters belonged to activist Islamic groups, but some belonged to Arafat's Fateh movement.

Palestinian police stopped the marchers from heading toward an Israeli-controlled area of the West Bank, where the protesters had hoped to confront Israeli troops.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is anxious to be seen as abiding by the

U.S.-brokered Wye River accords with Israel.

President Bill Clinton visited Israel and the Palestinian areas earlier this week to try and break the deadlock in the accords.

Palestinians, especially pleased by his hints of approval of Palestinian statehood, want to sustain the newly-friendly ties.

Israel was to have withdrawn from West Bank territory Friday as part of the Wye accords. On Wednesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he would miss the deadline and not move until he saw Palestinians were containing anti-Israel violence.

Any angry Palestinians on the street might have felt by the missed deadline was

swallowed up by the pro-Iraq protests.

In Manger Square in Bethlehem — where just days ago, U.S. President Bill Clinton was greeted rapturously — several hundred marchers shouted "Death to Clinton." Protesters burned a U.S. flag. Palestinian security briefly detained an Associated Press writer for photographing the flag-burning, and released him on condition that he not take pictures of other anti-U.S. actions.

After the demonstration, the marchers threw stones at Israeli troops guarding the entrance to the city, just south of Jerusalem.

The troops responded with rubber-coated metal

bullets and tear gas.

Fifteen protesters were injured.

In another sign of Palestinian efforts to contain anti-U.S. sentiment, police shut down two local TV stations and a radio in Ramallah.

Both TV stations broadcast test signals saying they were closed "until further notice" and on the radio station's frequency, there was only instrumental music.

There was no official explanation for the shut down, but Al Watan TV station had broadcast pro-Iraqi interviews; Al Nasr TV had broadcast nationalist music; and The Voice of Peace had devoted its broadcasts on Thursday to a popular nationalist Iraqi singer.



Susan Jasin, 5, is comforted by her mother in a Baghdad hospital on Friday. U.S. missiles slammed into Iraq for a second successive day as President Bill Clinton, his presidency in peril, planned last minute manoeuvring to try to avoid impeachment in the House of Representatives (Reuters photo)

Top Hamas man escapes from jail

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian police acknowledged Friday that a former top military commander from the Islamist group Hamas escaped from a Gaza jail last week just three days before the historic visit here by U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Adnan Al Ghul, who Israel considers the right-hand man of top Hamas military leader Mohammed Deif, broke out of his jail cell late last week and has been hunted by Palestinian police ever since, security officials told AFP.

Israeli military officials told the Haaretz newspaper they believe Ghul was behind the planting of a large bomb found late Thursday by Israeli sol-

diers near an army patrol route along the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

But the Palestinian officials said Ghul had been ill for some time and no longer plays a role in the military branch of Hamas, acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement. Israel suspects Ghul of involvement in a wave of suicide bombings against Israel in 1995 and 1996 and it initiated a security alert after being informed by Palestinian police of his escape.

Israeli and Palestinian security officials said Ghul was an expert in collecting explosives and assembling bombs and Israel suspects him of providing logistical support to su-

cide bombers.

The bomb found late Thursday in Gaza was made from an anti-tank mine connected to six kilograms of explosives and was apparently designed to explode as an Israeli patrol passed by, an army spokesman said. But a Palestinian security official cast doubt on the Israeli army version as Palestinian liaison officers had not been allowed to inspect the device as is usually the case.

Ghul was initially arrested by Palestinian police following suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in February and March 1996.

But he was acquitted by a Palestinian security court and then recruited into the security

forces as were a number of senior Hamas activists as part of a Palestinian National Authority bid to coopt the opposition movement.

Ghul was rearrested in March but it was not clear what the charges were against him.

Israeli security sources believe Ghul is the top aide to Deif, who is Israel's most wanted man and whom the Palestinian National Authority agreed to arrest as part of the stalled Wye River peace agreement reached last October. A senior officer told reporters the army had previously only seen such bombs in south Lebanon and never before in the Palestinian territories.

Iraq says it shot down 77 missiles

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Baghdad said Friday it had shot down 77 of the 305 missiles fired against Iraq since the launch of the military campaign by Britain and the United States.

"Iraqi anti-aircraft fire destroyed 77 of the 305 missiles launched on Iraq since midnight Wednesday (2100 GMT) until 4:00 p.m. (1300 GMT Friday)," the armed forces general command said in a statement, the first since Operation Desert Fox began.

"The new American-British aggression targeted residential zones, hospitals, civilian installations and several homes belonging to citizens," it said in a statement carried by the official Iraqi News Agency.

It said the missiles also targeted factories, commerce ministry warehouses, telecommunications centres and several military units, adding that there were "several casualties among innocent civilians."

Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz also charged Friday that the United States and Britain had attacked civilians and civilian targets, including an oil refinery in Basra.

Arabs criticise U.S. attacks

(Continued from page 1)

In Cairo, hundreds of worshippers gathered at the Al Azhar Mosque to shout demands for Arabs to defend Iraq against the American onslaught.

"Leaders of the country, let us go to holy war," the protesters chanted.

Sheikh Mohammed Tantawi, head of Al Azhar, urged solidarity with Iraqis in his sermon. "Stand by the Iraqi people, or we will be hit by God's damnation," he preached.

Inside the mosque, one protester, Mohammed Abdurabbu, 27, shouted, "Attack American interests. Close the American Embassy." Others questioned Clinton's motive for the repeated missile strikes on Iraq.

"Iraq is suffering because of an American whore and a big

baby boy," said Mohammed Hassan, 20, a medical student.

In countries closely allied to the United States authorities brought out massive security forces to prevent demonstrations from turning violent.

About 300 police ringed no more than 40 protesters at a mosque near the U.S. Embassy in Cairo.

In the West Bank city of Bethlehem — where Clinton was greeted enthusiastically just days ago — hundreds of protesters chanted "Death to Clinton."

About 15,000 people marched through the Yemeni capital of Sana'a and 2,500 people — mostly students — held a sit-in outside a U.N. office in Lebanon's capital Beirut. Demonstrators in the southern Lebanese city of Sidon shouted "America is the enemy of God" and "Clinton is the terrorist of the century."

The leftist Beirut newspaper As-Safir condemned the attacks in a commentary by its editor-publisher, saying they would only increase Saddam's power, giving him "a new lease on life."

In the past two days of attacks, the U.S. and British strikes also have been criticised by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and the 52-nation Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the world's largest Muslim group.

The main exception to a united Arab front was Kuwait, whose invasion by Iraq in 1990 led to the Gulf war. Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Sabah told the daily Al Rai Al Amm the current crisis was strictly between Iraq and the United Nations.

"We have nothing to do with it whatsoever," he was quoted as saying.

Regent: We are saddened, pained over Iraq tragedy

(Continued from page 1)

"That is the exchange that took place this morning with His Majesty King Hussein who directs and blesses the faithful and principled stands of Jordan which represents the continuity of Arab renaissance and the Great Arab Revolt."

Earlier Thursday the Regent and visiting Palestinian President Yasser Arafat held talks and issued a joint statement expressing grave concern over

the escalation of the American-British strikes against Iraq and voiced their full solidarity with the Iraqi people.

The joint statement called for efforts to stop the situation from deteriorating and to resolve the dispute by political means under international law.

"The two sides call for the respect for the sovereignty of Iraq and its independence and the unity of its territory, which are basic elements to guarantee the security and stability of

the region," the statement said.

The Regent and Arafat discussed the latest developments in the peace process; and according to the joint statement, they demanded the full implementation of the Wye River accord and in accordance with its timetable.

Following an extraordinary session, the Jordanian government issued a statement about the developments in Iraq.

"The Council of Ministers expresses its grave concern

over the situation in Iraq and the use of military force which can only increase the suffering of the Iraqi people who have been the victims of the U.N. sanctions," the statement added.

It said "military force cannot guarantee a solution to the question of weapons of mass destruction and a solution requires the pooling of all serious efforts to contain the situation and ensure the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Iraqi people."

The Saturday Crossword

PERSONAL SONGS

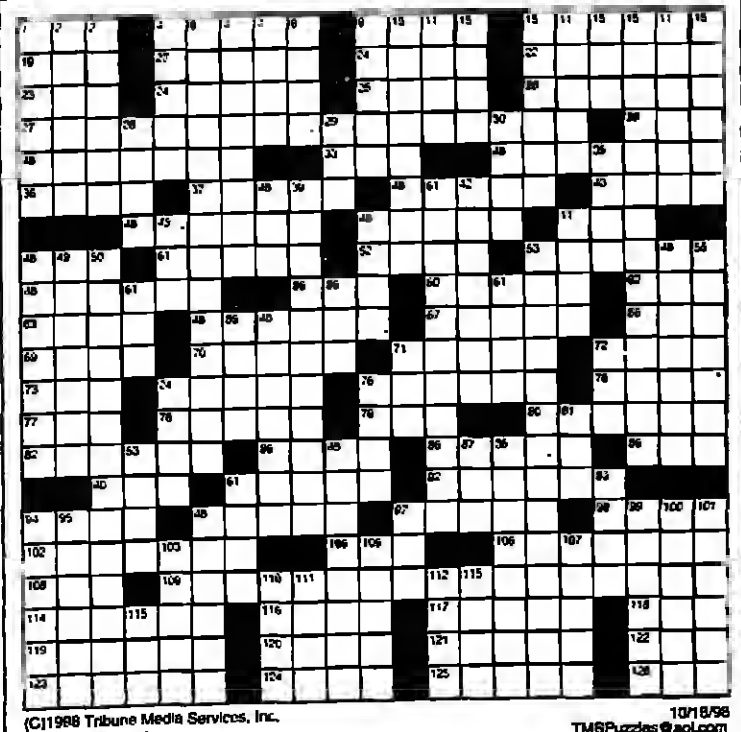
By Robert H. Wolfe, North Woodmere, New York

ACROSS

- 1 Literary snappers
- 4 Cops shouter
- 9 Speech problem
- 13 Hums' leader
- 18 Buddy
- 20 Cognizant
- 21 Opposed to prof.
- 22 Detroit
- 23 Cruise shelter
- 24 Great beans
- 25 H.S. junior's exam
- 26 Son of William the
- 27 Church song?
- 31 Actress Lupino
- 32 Jumps the tracks
- 33 Invention Whitney
- 34 Live leathers
- 36 Can. province
- 37 Page number
- 40 Barry and Nelson
- 43 Writing tools
- 44 Writer Asch
- 45 Audible breaths
- 47 Drunkard
- 48 Lunkie
- 51 Baroque tune, "Mona"
- 52 Sioux tribe
- 53 Pickled
- 54 "United States"
- 56 Auction action
- 58 Can
- 60 Gabor sister
- 63 Fruity quills
- 64 Starts
- 67 Holiday seasons
- 68 Polite address
- 69 Actor Neeson
- 70 Mourful cries
- 71 Jane Wyman film
- 72 Stores in "Honky Women"
- 73 Golf 3, 4, or 5
- 74 Red pepper pod
- 75 Timid var.
- 76 Formerly
- 77 End of a right, maybe: abbr.
- 78 French city known for textiles
- 79 Police call letters
- 80 Atmosphere
- 82 Shut forcefully again
- 84 Unusually tear
- 86 Glass veil
- 87 Draft letters
- 88 M-m-m-m good!
- 89 Appears
- 92 Peter Pan's crowner
- 94 First word, often
- 96 Egyptian corn

DOWN

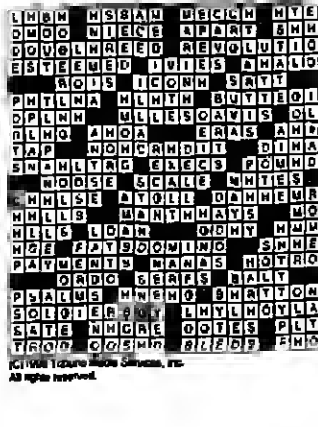
- 1 Garden pests
- 2 Upset stomach
- 3 Tabernacle tables
- 4 Lama
- 5 Bounty hunter's song?
- 6 Short negligee
- 7 Commemorative
- 8 Those not listed
- 9 Element of a pickel
- 10 Animate
- 11 Arcturus or Alpha Centauri, e.g.
- 12 Podiatrist bread?
- 13 University of
- 14 Over jocular
- 15 Cure hula
- 16 Ditty Rogers sang to Hammerstein?
- 17 City in the Netherlands
- 18 Parliament add-on?
- 28 Chatters
- 29 Name for a lion
- 30 A few laughs
- 31 End of time, briefly
- 32 Sports-caster
- 33 Berman
- 34 Billy Graham song?
- 35 Mrs. Plum's song?
- 42 Small angels
- 43 Norse goddess
- 44 Creates a new town
- 47 French religious figures: abbr.
- 48 Illegal kick
- 49 Emerge in waves
- 50 Song by Zubin Mehta?
- 53 Tune Nixon sang to Ford?
- 54 Manifest
- 55 Adds shadows
- 57 Ending for a belief
- 59 "... a Most Unusual Day"
- 61 Nasties of tennis
- 62 Top lip
- 65 Zantier
- 66 Salutate
- 67 Tulle
- 74 Cherry-stone or, interlocked, e.g.
- 75 Takes up stations
- 81 Letters for 41
- 83 Hawaiian least
- 85 Dabblers
- 87 Queen of the
- 88 Old-time dental anesthetic
- 91 Chapter of the Koran
- 93 Catch sight of
- 94 Half notes
- 95 Look eviler
- 96 Eastward
- 97 Pen manufacturer
- 99 Writing implement
- 100 L2 - W1
- 101 Teeming
- 103 Flooding maker
- 105 Get back to even
- 107 Sonar
- 110 Shrike gn.
- 111 Clearing substance
- 112 Hanging loosely
- 113 "Lockdown"
- 114 Railroad
- 115 Arctic surface



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Demonstrations staged in various parts of Kingdom

(Continued from page 1)

He called on Jordanians "to stop anyone inside, or outside the country, from being able to harm the Kingdom's security."

Other speakers at Friday's University Mosque gathering, including opposition leader Leith Sobellat, who was jailed for inciting violent pro-Iraqi demonstrations in Jordan earlier this year, were more critical.

"Arabs are traitors. Iraq is being slaughtered while they are looking on," shouted Islamic Action Front Party member Hamzah Mansour.

He said most of the region's governments were critical, or at best, lukewarm in their support for the intensive air raids.

"The American-British-Zionist aggression on Iraq is directed at the whole Arab Nation, including Jordan," Mansour declared.

But several members in the crowd persuaded an angry worshipper not to take to the street in protest after he interrupted the speeches urging worshippers to start a march.

"Down with Clinton," "With our blood and soul we sacrifice for [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein," "Hey nation, wake up" and "No to the Arab silence," shouted a crowd of university students outside the mosque.

Other speakers condemned the attacks, which coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and some slammed what they called Washington's double-standard policies vis-a-vis the

Middle East.

Friday prayers at Amman's main Al Hussein Mosque in downtown Amman passed without incident under the careful watch of baton-wielding riot police.

However, several politicians said the general popular mood was nothing close to the spirit of defiance that prevailed at the height of the 1990-91 Gulf war, when thousands of Jordanians held daily demonstrations across the Kingdom to express solidarity with Iraq.

Many attributed this to a general mood of despair after the 1991 Gulf war that overturned the world's political map, day-to-day worries over poverty, unemployment and high living costs in addition to a series of government warnings that Amman would not tolerate any demonstrations.

In the back of the government's mind are violent riots that broke up in southern Jordan in February during a previous crisis between Iraq and the United Nations. One man was killed while security forces forcibly broke up pro-Iraqi demonstrations.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadi, who met with heads of Jordan's more than 20 political parties on Thursday to persuade them not to encourage street processions, said on Friday he was pleased with Jordanians' high sense of responsibility.

"Not a single problem [in relation with the strikes] was recorded anywhere in the country," he told the Jordan Times. "And the several marches were all peaceful

and ended with no problems."

But some opposition sources yesterday said police broke up a demonstration in the northern city of Irbid and arrested at least seven political activists.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, around 70 women representing women's organisations across the Middle East gathered outside the United Nations headquarters in Amman waving banners stating: "Iraq is the U.S. and the U.K.'s Whipping Boy" and "Stop the genocidal sanctions on Iraq."

The women, chanting pro-Iraqi slogans, issued a statement to the press calling on the international community to put an end to the aggression against the Iraqis.

"We condemn these attacks which coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a clear violation of the Iraqi people's basic right to live," the statement read.

Around 100 Jordanians later marched from the professional associations headquarters in Shmeisani to the nearby U.N. offices, in support of Iraq.

The march was permitted by Qadi, but only after police earlier prevented several hundred people from making the 500-metre-march, witnesses said.

The march, which was organised by trade unionists, went ahead peacefully, with protesters brandishing anti-American banners.

The 80,000-strong Professional Associations, long a

hotbed of political activism, said it would start a campaign on Saturday to collect money, food and other kind donations to support their "Iraqi brethren."

In a show of solidarity with Baghdad, a popular pro-Iraqi committee of opposition groups and independent personalities visited the Iraqi embassy in Amman shortly after the air strikes began.

Jordan's opposition parties, spearheaded by the IAF, issued scores of highly-emotional statements condemning what they termed as the indifference of Arab governments towards the military aggression on Iraq.

The 21-member Arab League has been divided since the 1990-91 Gulf crisis as they were split into pro and anti-Iraqi stands.

The influential Amman Chamber of Industry, which has campaigned for years for strong trade and political ties with Iraq, also issued a statement condemning the strikes on Baghdad.

Chamber Chairman Khalid Abu Hassan led a delegation of businesspersons who visited the Iraqi embassy to express "support with Iraq and to condemn the unjustified attack on Iraq."

Local newspapers united in condemning the use of force against Iraq while several slammed the United States for failing to show the same might towards Israel, which continues to defy the implementation of U.N. Security Council resolutions to settle the decades-old Arab-Israeli conflict.

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Study: Quick changes of governments negatively affect the economy

**** A FRESH study of the economic situation in Jordan has confirmed that the legislations introduced recently in the Kingdom were an encouraging factor for economic growth but the phenomenon of quick changes of governments was found to negatively affect the economy. A senior planning official said in a lecture recently.**

Yusuf Mansur, head of the technical unit at the Ministry of Planning did not elaborate about the study but emphasised the importance of formulating legislations that would ensure protection of competition. Mansur explained the forces affecting any producing firm by pointing out that there should be more than one buyer of its products and more than one source. "In addition, any producing firm should employ modern technology and should feel continued threat from competing sources so as to be encouraged for constant development," the senior planning official indicated.

Mansur, who also heads a team studying the competitiveness of Jordanian industries, was speaking during a seminar organised by the Arab Banking Corporation (Jordan). The team warned of a dangerous retreat if some sectors are not restructured and prepared to venture into the fierce competition that will unfold as a result of economic openness when Jordan joins the WTO (World Trade Organisation) and enters into economic partnership with Europe. He pointed out that the real worry lies in the low value added which should be increased in order to arrive at a distinguished Jordanian product (Al Dustour).

Minister approves setting up industrial chamber for the Irbid governorate

**** THE MINISTER of industry and trade has approved the establishment of an industrial chamber in the governorate of Irbid to be based in the northern city of Irbid. The minister requested the 25 founding members to form a committee to proceed with the necessary legal procedures to set up the chamber.**

Maher Al Nasser, vice president of the Irbid Chamber of Commerce and a founding member expressed his satisfaction for the decision which is expected to enhance the industrial presence in the

governorate. "Such a chamber would serve the interests of industrialists in the governorate and would provide them with the information they need especially as the Al Hassan Industrial Estate has succeeded in attracting many industries that require the presence of an industrial chamber," Al Nasser said.

He emphasised that the chamber would contribute to solving the various problems of the industrialists and facilitate their administrative measures as well as consolidate decentralisation (Al Ra'i).

Turkish textiles hit hard by Asian, Russian crises

ISTANBUL (R) — Cheap Asian competition and a loss of Russian buyers is pounding the Turkish textiles industry, and now some of the two million jobs in this vital industry are being cut as output falls.

Turkey's textile and ready-to-wear sector accounts for 39 per cent of its total industrial production, and some 10 per cent of its gross national product (GNP).

"We expect a 30 to 40 per cent drop in textile and ready-to-wear exports in the last quarter, but annual exports will equal last year's," Ismet Ozcan, president of the Textile Industrialists' Association (TGSD), told Reuters.

Two million people are directly employed and four million indirectly employed in the textile sector. Of Turkey's top 500 firms, 130 are textile-related.

Park Tekstil recently announced cutbacks, citing losses incurred by under-capacity production, falling sales abroad and other sectoral woes for its cutbacks.

It announced 1.2 trillion lira (\$4 million) losses in January-September 1998, compared with a 675.6 billion (\$2.2 million) lira profit last year.

Many other listed textile firms posted lower year-on-year profits for the first nine months of 1998.

An exporters group in the cotton-rich Aegean region said that 300 workshops in the area had closed down, with the remainder laying off close to 20 per cent of their workforce.

Turkish exports to Russia and CIS countries fell by 30.5 and 28.6 per cent respectively in the first eight months of 1998.

Exports to Germany, the largest European market, fell by 1.6 per cent in the same period, according to TGSD figures.

Although a rise in exports to other European countries and the United States is expected to compensate for losses this year, further shrinkage in world markets is seen in 1999.

Sector representatives said the crises in world financial markets was particularly bad for Turkish companies, which recently made big investments in machinery following a 1995 customs union with the European Union.

Textile firms have called on the government to make available new sources of financial backing to support their exports in a hostile climate.

Turkey's leading textile workers' union has threatened a nationwide strike in 60 days if employers stick to a decision to freeze wages in the collective bargaining process.

Qatar attracts lenders but pays more as oil price slides

DOHA (R) — Comforted by Qatar's huge gas reserves and big name development projects, foreign banks continue to lend millions of dollars to the Arab Gulf state despite this year's dive in oil prices, bankers and officials say.

But the price slide combined with financial turmoil in other emerging markets is forcing Qatar, a tiny oil producer with seven per cent of the world's gas reserves, to pay a premium to attract lenders.

The latest in a string of loans was signed this week when banks lent \$510 million to fund expansion plans by refiner National Oil Distribution Co (Nodco). Next week, another group is to lend \$475 million to Qatar Vinyl Co, a petrochemical firm.

They follow hard on the heels of a \$100 million facility arranged in July by regional banks for a new five-star hotel.

"You will see more deals being signed in the next two months," Finance Minister Youssef Hussein Kamal told Reuters.

The deals raise the tally of Qatar's external debt built up over the past four years to more than \$12 billion, or 130 per cent of gross domestic product.

Three-quarters of these are project-related and non-recourse finance, so repayment starts after the project is commissioned and they are not directly guaranteed by the state. Still, most ventures have state-owned firms as majority shareholders.

"The massive drop in crude oil prices has not altered the international financial community's perceptions about the Qatari economy," Paribas Chairman Andre Levy-Lang said.

"The fundamentals remain strong and the outlook for the economy is bright," he said on a recent visit to Doha. Paribas arranged the Qatar Vinyl Co loan.

Bankers said the presence of big foreign firms in Qatari ventures was a major attraction to project financiers. Qatar Vinyl's foreign partners include Norway's Norsk Hydro and a unit of France's Elf Aquitaine.

Another source of confidence is Qatar's huge gas reserves, the basis of its drive to develop new industry. Until these plans are realised, Qatar is relying on its small oil reserves.

"With around seven per cent of the world gas reserves con-

centrated in its continental shelf and a pragmatic political leadership, Qatar still represents investors' paradise," said an economist working with a Qatari bank, who asked not to be named.

But turmoil in emerging markets is taking its toll, forcing up loan prices and encouraging Qatar to put off a bond issue.

"Higher margins on loans are inevitable, as you see in the Nodco case. But these are mainly due to the Asian crisis and a general deterioration in the economic climate and are not going to starve good projects of financing," the economist said.

The nine-year Nodco loan was priced at between 55 basis points (bps) over the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) for the first four years, 65 bps for years five and six and 85 bps for the remaining three years. Nodco is a subsidiary of state-owned Qatar General Petroleum Corp.

In 1997, the pricing for Qatar's sovereign borrowing on five-year loans, each worth between \$300 million-\$500 million, rose during the year from 30 bps to 40 bps over LIBOR.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You and an older person have been known to go around over things that seem important at the time, but later look trivial. That's because you have that sort of love-hate relationship. You learn from each other. If you didn't have each other, you might get stuck in your own point of view, and that would be terrible for both of you.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) If you've done your planning right, you've got most everything on your list finished. The urge to push yourself has been overwhelming. Today, the urge to play is just about that strong. Sure, there are still things to do there always will be. If you get the chance to do something fun, make it your top priority. Everything else can wait.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) The moon's transit through Capricorn helps you stick to practical matters. Venus is in Capricorn, too, and brings you luck. What could all this possibly and up to? Well, how about shopping? Have you figured out how much you're going to spend and where you're going to spend it? If not, this is a great day to get started.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) The cavalry is coming to the rescue today! Something that was starting to feel like a burden could become a lot more fun. Don't be dismayed if everything doesn't go quite as planned, however. Looks like there could be a bit of a disruption, but that's OK. Just take it in stride and keep on rolling.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You're still surrounded by love, but it looks like you now have some other sort of challenge to deal with. Not to worry. There are friends around who'd like to help, and your family is high on that list. You won't be spending a lazy Saturday, that's for sure, but it looks like you could still have a great time.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You're a person who habitually gets homework done early. That's why you get the good grades. Don't be dismayed if some of your friends or family give you dirty looks. It's not your fault their lives are a mess. They could always do what you did. You've probably told them enough times. Don't do that again. Teach through example.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) The moon is in Capricorn. The old line

about opposites attracting applies to signs that are 90 degrees apart, like Libra and Capricorn. Capricorn is a hard worker, an entrepreneur. Today, you could be attracted to that type. Perhaps you'll want to start a business, that is, take on Capricorn characteristics yourself. That's a great idea.

SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) You can learn how to do just about anything you set your mind to, so get busy. You could make a lot of money by exploiting your natural talents. Being talented is only part of the equation. You also have to do what everybody else has to do, and that is, of course, how you get to Carnegie Hall. You practice, practice, practice.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) It's time to come back to earth. You're still incredibly lucky. Keep that in mind while you're figuring out your finances. You'd like the money to just be handled, preferably by someone else. The same goes for shopping. Don't worry. Get a Capricorn, Taurus or Virgo to help. They love that stuff.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) You're looking marvellous today, and it's not by accident. You've earned that ability to walk around with your head held high, the pride and confidence in your voice, the way you exude self-assurance. You're not only magnificent, you're also nice about it. Keep that in mind when you run into a bit of a problem today.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) You can expect a "Honey Do" list today to keep you busy. This list could be compiled by someone you love, or in the back of your own mind. You know what needs to be done. Now that the weekend's here, you'd rather sleep in. Well, compromise. Do both. Sleep in, then race around and get everything done.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) A gathering with friends should go well today. There's plenty of everything to go around, especially love. Take that as a sign of your bounty, if you're feeling a little short on cash. As you know, it's better to have lots of friends in times of no money, than lots of money in times of no friends.

Birth Stone of December:
Turquoise — Zircon

South Korea's non-performing loans stand at \$111.7 billion

SEOUL (AFP) — The non-performing loans (NPLs) of South Korean financial institutions stood at 139 trillion won (\$111.7 billion) at end-September, a senior official has said.

"The non-performing loans stood at 139 trillion won as of the end of September," top presidential advisor for economic affairs Kang Bong-Kyun said.

The 139 trillion won includes 80 trillion won of loans whose interest payments were in arrears for between one and three months, Kang said.

"Depending on the economic situation, this 80 trillion won could be labelled as performing loans in the future," he said.

"There is also high possibility of the 80 trillion won being cut through rights issues, asset sale or joint ventures with foreign investors by debtors," he said.

The remaining 59 trillion won includes "doubtful loans, estimated loss and substandard loans," Kang said.

He stressed that the combined amount of doubtful loans, estimated losses and substandard loans decreased by nine trillion won (\$7.2 billion) during the six-month period.

South Korea plans to use a total of 64 trillion won to clear the mess at its banks, including 32.5 trillion won for the purchase of NPLs and 31.5 trillion won for recapitalisation and deposit insurance.

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Asian Games

Fuad fails in high jump; Kingdom completes participation today

By Aleen Bannayan
in Amman and Jordan
sports media reporters
in Bangkok

THE KINGDOM'S only remaining medal hopeful — Fakhraddin Fuad — Friday failed to even better his own personal best in the high jump when he could only clear 210 centimetres at the 13th Asian Games, which will conclude in Bangkok Sunday.

Lee Jin-taek of South Korea went on to win the gold clearing the bar at 2.27 metres.

Following the competition, Fuad opted not to comment while his coach only said: "Fakhraddin could have done far better."

Fuad, a gold medalist at the Pan-Arab Games, had achieved 215 centimetres in a recent training camp although his record stands at 2.22.

In Thursday's events, Tareq Najjar also had disappointing results in the discus failing in four of his attempts and only managing 51.48 compared to own personal best of 52.60 metres.

Teammate Mohammad Abdul Baqi, who set a Jordanian record of 15.53 by 18 centimetres in the triple jump during a recent training camp in Qatar, competes Saturday, ending Jordan's participation at the event where the Kingdom had 19 officials and 37 athletes in 11 sports.

Jordan again failed to win a gold medal at the Asian Games. In the past two participations in the Seoul '86 and Hiroshima '94, Jordan's sole medals were

achieved through taekwondo with three silver and five bronze medals.

Jordan won five medals in the last sporting event of the century where 41 countries took part with only Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan missing.

The taekwondo team secured four medals including silver by Ibrahim Agel, Ala' Kutkut, and Hussein Tahleh and bronze by Mohammad Farajeh. Mohammad Abu Khadijeh added a bronze in boxing.

The Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) and the Ministry of Culture and Youth had placed utmost importance on the Asian Games describing it as an "invaluable chance to assess our teams and pinpoint our location on the map of Asian sports." Officials also agreed that the Games were an excellent chance to prepare teams for the upcoming Pan-Arab Games in Amman next summer and the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Although the best athletes were enlisted through a screening process in each sport, apart from taekwondo, the rest of the sports produced below average results especially in athletics and swimming where athletes' finishing times did not even match their own records.

A brief look at Jordan's participation shows the Kingdom easily eliminated in the howling and shooting events.

In karate, Khalil Farran took sixth place alongside 12 competitors while teammate Butheina Mahsir, a Pan-Arab Games bronze medalist, finished fifth

among nine players.

In athletics, Mohammad Shuman and Mohammad Mutari were eliminated from the 800 metres.

Mutari came short of his Jordanian time and finished the event with a time of 1:55.20 while Shuman finished with a time of 1:55.22.

Mutari had earlier competed in the 1,500 metres finishing with a time of 3:59.30 short of his own 3:47.9.

In the 400 metres, Shuman also came short of his own best time of 48.28 finishing last with a time of 49.64.

In swimming, Hana Majaj lagged far behind her local records finishing last in the 200-metre butterfly with a time of 2:40.85 while her local time was 2:26.00. In the 100-metre butterfly, Pan-Arab Games bronze medalist Majaj also came in 18th with a time of 1:13.16, also off her local time.

In boxing, Jordan's top boxer Abu Khadijeh settled for bronze, after having won three gold medals within a year — at the 8th Pan-Arab Games, the West Asian Games in Tehran and the 18th Arab Boxing Championships.

Basel Hindawi, bronze medalist at the Pan-Arab Games, and gold medalist Ayman Nadi failed to earn medals for Jordan as they competed alongside 180 athletes from 31 nations in the event.

In squash, the country's top player Mohammad Saeed lost to Pakistan's top player — Zarak Khan.

In taekwondo, Nancy

Hindi, Zaha Talhouni, Luma Abu Judum, Ali Asmar, Alisar Matar, Mohammad Ahul Ruz and Ahlam Bino lost their bouts. The rest of their teammates secured four medals.

In judo, Mousa Khalaf, a silver medalist at the Pan-Arab Games, was eliminated, alongside Rami Dasouqi and Tawfiq Suleiman.

In gymnastics, Jordan's Ahmad Abdo and Shadi Khouri obtained 45th and 47th places respectively.

In weightlifting, Awad Aboudi competed in the heavyweight over 105-kilogramme class managing overall eighth place heating Arab competitors from Kuwait, Syria and Lebanon.

On the other hand, the country's top weightlifter, Ayed Khawaldeh was the first athlete to test positive at the Bangkok Games after setting a new Arab record finishing seventh among fifteen participants in the 56-kilogramme class.

The Olympic Council of

Asia (OCA) reprimanded the Jordan Olympic Committee after Khawaldeh was found to have taken the diuretic Triamterene in a random test following which he was immediately disqualified and expelled from the Games Village.

The OCA handed the matter to the sport's governing body to impose an international suspension which will bar him from the Pan-Arab Games.

Khawaldeh also failed a second positive test before Jordanian delegation officials ordered his return home.

Khawaldeh, who was the first Jordanian to win three bronze medals in one event at the 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut last summer, said his Chinese coach has instructed him to take the medicine during the West Asian Games in Tehran and during another championship in Algeria last year, and did not know that it contained a banned substance.

Asian Games medal table

	Gold	silver	bronze	total
China	113	85	61	259
South Korea	62	43	50	155
Japan	51	52	65	168
Kazakhstan	21	22	27	70
Thailand	20	22	36	78
Chinese Taipei	18	17	37	72
Iran	9	10	13	32
DPR Korea	7	12	9	28
Uzbekistan	5	21	13	38
Malaysia	5	10	14	29
Indonesia	5	10	10	25
India	5	7	15	27
Kuwait	4	5	4	14
Hong Kong	4	4	6	14
Pakistan	2	4	7	13
Mongolia	2	2	10	14
Sri Lanka	3	0	1	4
Singapore	2	2	8	12
Vietnam	1	5	9	15
Philippines	1	4	8	13
Myanmar	1	4	4	9
Qatar	1	2	2	5
Turkmenistan	1	0	1	2
Kyrgyzstan	0	3	3	6
Jordan	0	3	2	5
Syria	0	2	3	5
Nepal	0	1	3	4
UAE	0	1	1	2
Macao	0	1	0	1
Bangladesh	0	0	1	1
Oman	0	0	1	1
Brunei	0	0	1	1
Total	343	344	425	1,112

AP Asian Games notebook

Israel may return to Asian Games in 2002: Excluded from the Asian Games for political reasons, Israel may return to the continental sporting fraternity at the next game, in South Korea. A games' press release said a special invitation was being considered for Israel, which was excluded before the 1978 games under pressure from participating Middle Eastern nations.

In its last games appearance, at Tehran in 1974, Israel won seven gold medals and finished sixth in the medals race.

Also hanned from the games is Iraq, an action that followed its invasion of Kuwait prior to the 1990 Gulf War.

The 2002 Games will be staged in Pusan, South Korea's second-largest city and major port. It is expected to attract 17,000 athletes, officials and media representatives, with competition planned in 32 sports.

The theme of the 2002 games will be "Asia is One," and the mascot a sea gull displaying "dynamic power, purity and valiant spirit."

TAKING IT OFF, AGAIN: The departure of the last Asian Games athletes from Bangkok will signal for some that it's time again to take it off.

So as not to tarnish Thailand's image, police

put a curb on the normally anything-goes nightlife scene during the Dec. 6-20 games, including a ban on stripping.

Aware of Bangkok's sex city reputation, some foreign visitors during the games were surprised at the relatively sedate activities along the city's nightlife strips.

"The bad news when the Asian Games close is that the traffic jams will resume. The good news is that go-go dancers will be showing stripping again," Bernard Trink, the entertainment columnist of the Bangkok Post, wrote Friday.

Authorities closed schools, opened new expressways and took other effective measures to combat Bangkok's notoriety for massive traffic jams.

THE NEXT GAMES: Taking hardly a breather after staging the Asian Games, Bangkok will hold the 7th Far East and South Pacific Games for the Disabled next month.

The Jan. 10-16 event will see 2,500 athletes from 42 countries and territories competing under the motto "Equality in One World."

The FESPIC Games will be held in some of the same modern stadiums built for the Asian Games, which end Sunday. The first FESPIC Games were held in Oita, Japan, in 1975. The

last were in Beijing four years ago.

RECORDS GALORE: Eleven world and 48 continental records have been broken so far at the Asian Games, and more countries are on the medals chart than at the last games, officials say.

Weightlifting accounted for all the new world marks, with China breaking 10 and South Korea one.

Records in weightlifting have been dropping like flies following a decision by the sport's ruling body to wipe all records prior to 1998 off the books. The reason: too much doping in the sport tainted previous records.

Of the 41 participating countries in Bangkok, 32 have been able to win medals while only 22 shared in the medals at the last games four years ago in Hiroshima, Japan.

Still noticeably missing from the medals chart are Yemen, Bhutan and the Maldives, which have never won medals at any games.

"The best way to promote sport (in Asia) is to let nations get medals at the Asian Games," says Wei Jizhong, a senior official of the Olympic Council of Asia. "When a sport developing country brings home a medal, their people will be happy. The government will put more money into sport."



South Korea's Lee Jin-Taek clears the bar during the men's high jump competition at the 13th Asian Games at the Thammasat University Sports Complex in Bangkok 18 December. Lee jumped a height of 2.27m and won the gold (AFP photo)

Blond Asians finally accepted at Asian Games

BANGKOK (AFP) — Four years ago they were the blond-haired, blue-eyed raiders, but after years of suspicion the former Soviet athletes have finally been accepted as Asians.

The five Central Asian republics made their debut at the 1994 Hiroshima Games and the amount of gold they plundered stunned and worried the traditional sporting powers.

Some said the new faces were too European and unwelcome. The likes of Kazakh pole vault champion Igor Potapovich and sprinter Natalya Torshina have returned to win more gold.

The Kazaks already have 19 titles in Bangkok and are well on the way to keeping fourth place in the overall medal table behind China, Japan and South Korea. But they have also won new friends.

Potapovich said "I remember in Hiroshima there were a few problems when people with white skin and blonde hair came in and won some of the medals but it's better now."

"They've calmed down a bit about us being here. I'm very good friends with some of the pole vaulters like Fumiaki Kobayashi of Japan. Pole vaulting, as a sport, is very friendly anyway."

"I feel the other Asian guys here are glad that I am around because they know I can help them."

Torshina also said the different culture had taken time to get used to.

There have also been a few new shocks for the Chinese, Japanese and Koreans in sports they have got used to dominating.

The Kazaks and Uzbeks have taken over the canoeing and picked up golds in the shooting from the hot shot Chinese. Igor Pirekeyev won Turkmenistan's first Bangkok Games gold in the men's free rifle event.

The raiders are also a worry in the judo — especially for Japan.

"Asia's performance level in judo is getting higher all the time," said former world champion Nobuyoshi Sato, Japan's deputy

chef de mission.

"While five East Asian nations divided the gold medals between them, the Soviet republics took away a few silver. We used to struggle against East Asia. Europe but from now on we will have to fight harder."

Kazakhstan's Ivan Beglav won the 66kg featherweight silver losing to Japan's Yukimasa Nakamura of Japan in the 111kg Uzbek light heavyweight. And Bagdasarov lost to Japan's Kosei Inoue in the under-100kg final.

In nearly every sport, the raiders have forced a rethink.

"They have shaken up the Asian Games," said one top member of the Olympic Council of Asia.

"We were worried about what people might think. Some of the smaller nations said they were losing medals to the newcomers but everything has worked out all right," he added.

In some sports the traditional Asians have been happy to see the newcomers are not a challenge.

Philippines basketball player Johnny Aharriantos said the white men cannot jump.

"They are not high leapers. They are not that athletic," he said with a smile of the Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan teams who were outclassed by the Philippines in the group matches.

'Land of Smiles' produces happy Games

BANGKOK (R) — The 13th Asian Games are drawing to a close with a smile on their face, unlike some recent major international sporting events where snarls and whining were the order of the day.

And mental health and sport experts say Thailand, "The Land of Smiles", where there is heavy reliance on tourism and the outlook on life is generally cheerful, can claim a large chunk of the credit.

Some veterans of this year's packed programme of major sports events, which has also included the Winter Olympics in Nagano, the World Cup in France and the Commonwealth Games in Malaysia, say Thailand's "Friendship beyond Frontiers" extravaganza was the winner hands down in low stress level.

In Nagano there was trashing of rooms by snowboarders and ice hockey players; soccer hooligans marred the World Cup; and political unrest swept over Kuala Lumpur's big event.

No one is even mentioning in the same breath as the other events the 1996 Atlanta Games where botched

arrangements on transport and results, as well as a bombing, turned the event into a recent Olympic low.

Thanu Chatanondh of the Thai Mental Health Department said the hospitality of Thais towards visiting competitors, as well as, ironically, the Asian economic crisis, contributed towards a good mood amongst athletes and officials.

"This has created a positive attitude amongst athletes which may be the reason there is not so much controversy," Thanu, a psychiatrist conducting research on the psychological impact of the Games, said on Friday.

He said the Games have also provided a break from the Asian economic crisis that has fostered a spirit of camaraderie amongst competitors.

"The aggression that athletes sometimes show towards officials and each other is less here because they realise that there are bigger problems in Asia."

Not that the Games have been trouble free.

Two weightlifters, a Jordanian and a Kuwaiti, have been caught for

doping. There have been complaints about the judging in the boxing, in Taekwondo and the walking.

But the Games, which began on December 6 and have just two days to go, have been the happiest he has attended, said Randhir Singh, Secretary General of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), which has overall charge of the Games.

"You always have some problems when there is competition but the atmosphere of cooperation between athletes and officials this time has been excellent," Singh said.

There have been crowd protests over controversial decisions in the Taekwondo and there were even raised tempers in a snooker match when an Indian player and team manager disputed a referee's decision.

Boxing has been a source of discontent — as usual — with losing competitors and teams venting their anger at officials.

But world amateur boxing chief Anwar Chowdhry says the 1998 Asian Games has been relatively incident free.

"At the 1990 Beijing Games

members of the North Korean team attacked a referee and in Tehran in 1974 the tournament had to be postponed for one day because of violence outside the ring," he said.

"We have had 160 bouts so far and seen only one protest lodged," in Bangkok, which is hosting its fourth Asian Games.

A spokeswoman for the Games organisers credited good communication between supervising committees and team managers for the relatively painless way problems have been sorted out.

"You have nine major committees and 46 minor committees, so it is difficult to get them together to speak with one voice," she said.

"But generally they have found a way because that is the Asian Way."

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Second weightlifter tests positive

BANGKOK (AFP) — A second weightlifter has failed a drug test at the Asian Games and been disqualified, the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) announced Friday.

Jaber Rashid Al Ajmi of Kuwait, who finished 10th and last in the men's over 105kg class on Monday, tested positive for the steroid nandrolone, said an OCA statement.

Jordan's Ayed Jassar Khawaldeh failed a test in the first week of the weightlifting after the 56kg competition and was sent home. Khawaldeh was found to have taken triamterene, a diuretic, to lose weight.

Al Ajmi was the only Kuwaiti weightlifter in Bangkok.

The OCA said the 19-year-old would face International

Weightlifting Federation (IWF) sanctions. The IWF has an automatic four-year ban for proved cases of steroid taking.

Al Ajmi underwent a random drug test after competing on Monday and both urine samples showed traces of nandrolone, said the OCA.

Weightlifting has blemished what appears to have been one of the cleanest Asian Games in recent history.

The OCA was thrown on the defensive over drugs after 11 Chinese, including seven swimmers, failed drug tests at the 1994 Hiroshima Games.

But despite weightlifting's poor record for drugs, IWF general secretary Tomas Ajan has defended his sport's action against doping while in Bangkok.

"Weightlifting is not infested with drugs. If there is a problem it is with all sports, from A to Z. You can't single out one sport."

Ajan stressed that the world body had taken effective steps to root out drug taking.

"At the Barcelona and Atlanta Olympics the IWF took the initiative to test all participants, although the International Olympic Committee wanted a random check on only six in each category."

"No one tested positive at the world championships and I expect this trend to continue in future," he declared.

Ito makes history with golden sprint hat-trick

Darsha steals show from absent Jayasinghe

BANGKOK (AFP) — Jubilant Koji Ito of Japan completed a golden sprint hat-trick at the Asian Games on Friday — but China's Li Xuemei suffered only despair and defeat as she sought to match him.

Ito's win in the 200 metre final gave Japan 11 track-and-field golds, but China overtook them even though Sri Lanka's Damayanthi Darsha's heat Li to the women's 200 metre gold in one of the major upsets of the Games.

China went top of the athletics rankings with victories in a dramatic 50 kilometre walk and the women's triple jump taking them to 12 titles. Darsha took Sri Lanka with three golds.

The 28-year-old Ito, who won the 100m and also won gold with Japan's 4x100m sprint relay, was never in trouble as he came home in a Games record 20.25 seconds.

Ito forged a comfortable lead by the halfway mark and held it round the bend and down the final stretch. Han Chaoming of China took the silver (20.70) and Sugath Tillekeratne of Sri Lanka, the men's 400m champion, the bronze (20.93).

Ito, who ran an Asian 100m record of 10.00sec on Monday, said: "I said before the race it meant everything and it does! This is the event I most wanted to win — the time was faster than I expected because of a strong headwind."

"Somebody may one day break my records but nobody can break my medals."

The previous men's 200m Games record of 20.41 was run by Talal Mansoor four years ago in Hiroshima. Ito match Thailand's Anas Ratnapol who scored the same golden treble of sprint titles in Tehran in 1974.

In the women's 200



Damayanthi Darsha of Sri Lanka waves her national flag after winning the gold medal with a new Asian Games record in the women's 200m competition of the 13th Asian Games at the Main Stadium of the Thammasat University Sports Complex. Darsha clocked 22.48sec to take home the gold (AFP photo)

metres final, Li led her from the blocks but Darsha, also the 400m winner, reeled her back over the final 40 metres. She won in 22.48 seconds, her second Asian record in two days. She had set a Games record of 23.14sec on Thursday in the heats.

Darsha said: "I didn't really prepare for the 200 here — the 400m was the event that mattered to me — but I'll be taking it seriously from now on."

"I certainly did not expect to run so fast. I was running this event for fun."

"I'm the first Sri Lankan woman to win two golds in one Asian Games — I'm so happy."

She said the win would help Sri Lanka to forget the disappointment of Susantika Jayasinghe's controversial exit. Sri Lanka's world silver medalist, was the co-favourite with Li for the 100m and 200m before pulling out citing a leg injury.

For Li, who spent a night in hospital in Bangkok this week because of illness, it was one race too many.

She timed 22.53 and

Yan Jiankui of China came third (23.15).

Li, who has a personal best of 22.01 seconds, said: "There was just no power in my legs — I felt nothing."

"Of course my illness counted against me today but no excuses — I lost to a better runner. Now it's back to training for the World Championships next year and the Olympics."

The closest finish of the day came when Supriati Sutono sneaked Indonesia's first Asian Games track-and-field gold for 36 years — then got a tongue-lashing from the man who won the last one.

The 26-year-old Sutono, half-amazed at herself after catching one of the pre-race favourites Sunila Rani of India in the final straight, stopped running just before the line.

A photo-finish revealed she had won in 15 minutes 54.45 seconds — just two hundredths of a second in front of Rani.

Mohammad Sarengat, who won the Asian 100m and 110m hurdles in 1962 and who is part of

Indonesia's medical team, said: "It was fantastic and terrible but I'm angry because she slowed down towards the finish."

"She almost lost. But, to be fair, we didn't expect her to beat the Indian."

Sutono responded: "I was trying to dive for the line but I flopped instead."

In other events, China's walker Wang Yinhong began the day in perfect style by beating defending champion Sergey Korepanov in sensational fashion to win by just a second after 50 kilometres.

He timed three hours 59 minutes and 26 seconds, then collapsed after his mammoth effort and final 300m-sprint.

Compatriot Ren Ruipeng ended the day with China's other win, winning the women's triple jump with a leap of 14.27 metres.

The decathlon saw Uzbekistan win both gold and silver through Oleg Veretelnikov, with a Games record of 8,278 points, and Ramil Ganiev

Japan crush Chinese for women's basketball gold

BANGKOK (AFP) — Mutsuku Nagata stole the show as Japan crushed a Chinese team missing its U.S.-based exiles to win the Asian Games women's basketball title here Friday.

Japan beat the favourites 93-69 to take the gold for the first time since the 1974 Tehran Games.

South Korea, the defending champions who were eliminated by China in Wednesday's semi-finals, beat Taiwan 92-76 in the bronze medal playoff.

Nagata topscored with 23 points and Japan broke open a close contest when the forward made a crucial steal midway through the final period which Chisako Hamada converted into two fast break points.

On the next play, a dangerous foul by Ma Zongging led to three Akemi Okazato free throws plus possession. A Taeko Oyama two pointer made it 65-55 for Japan and they never looked back.

"We had the stronger legs so we simply ran them down," Japanese head coach Fumikazu Nakagawa said. China were also slowed by foul trouble.

They were also missing center Zheng Haixia, who signed for the Los Angeles Sparks in the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) last year.

On top of her 23 points, Nagata had seven rebounds, two assists and a steal while forward Chisako Shimada, who alternated for ball distribution duties for the Japanese, had 20 points including 11 from the line.

Taeko Oyama, deputising for starting point guard Kahori Kawakami whom they lost through injury in a preliminary round win over China last weekend, played for most of the game and knocked in 18 points, snagged seven rebounds and made two assists.

Japan went through the tournament as the only undefeated team.

The Chinese, who sought for the same medal as in Hiroshima four years ago, were led by their point guard Jiang Xu with 17 points. Miao Lijie had 16.

The Chinese cause was not helped by injury to their star player Miao Biao said by the official Chinese press to be attracting interest from WNBA scouts.

She rode the bench with a morose look on her face as her team disintegrated.

"Now we look forward to the Sydney Olympics and we hope to do well," Nakagawa said.



South Korean basketballers (in blue) seal off a Kazakhstan player (C) during semi-final basketball action at the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok. South Korea won 101-64 to advance the final (AFP photo)

Asians ready to breach last sports barriers and challenge the West

BANGKOK (AP) — When it comes to their sports race with the West, Asians hope they're in the track shoes of Koji Ito.

Running a 100-metre heat at the Asian Games, the Japanese sprinter fell just one hundredth of a second short of breaking into the world's elite sub-10-second club.

Ito's blazing effort in this glamour event, in which Asians long have lagged behind, symbolised for many that the continent was on the threshold of closing a once yawning gap with the West.

In many sports the twain, East and West, have already met as equals — or more. China is a world power, holding a slew of records and a fourth place in medal standings at the last Olympics in Atlanta.

But at those 1996 games, Asians collected only 12 percent of the gold medals, although they account for 60 per cent of the world's population. With 980 million people, the world's second most populous nation, India, managed only one bronze.

A raft of explanations are offered. Many in the potential talent pool of 3.5 billion Asians are still too busy eking out a marginal existence, and not well enough nourished, to take part in sports.

Their governments don't have funds for elaborate sport programs, or have slashed them amid Asia's economic crisis, which forced some countries to send smaller teams to the Asian Games, fire expensive foreign coaches and reduce allowances for athletes.

Although growing taller and stronger by the year, Asians generally have a disadvantage against Western competitors in disciplines requiring power and bulk.

New, middle-class affluence is also a drawback in some countries. "Young kids from wealthier families prefer recreation like playing golf or watching television. They don't want to run around a track 24

times a day, inflicting pain on themselves," says Maurice R. Nicholas, secretary-treasurer of the Asian Amateur Athletic Association, who hails from prosperous Singapore.

Despite this, Asians have marshaled world-class athletes in a large — but not always glamorous — number of sports. These include archery, badminton, baseball, diving, gymnastics, shooting, squash, softball and table tennis. And they excel in Asian-bred disciplines like judo, karate and taekwondo.

In several sports, Asian women have already bested Western rivals while leaving their men still lagging behind. At the Asian Games, seven Chinese women shattered world weightlifting records in as many days.

Although some of its athletes have been caught using performance-enhancing drugs and suspicions have been raised about others, China's women also hold seven world marks in swimming and four in middle and longer distance track events.

The impression by some that Asians haven't quite made it into the big time stems from their lackluster results in sports that attract the most international attention and money.

Asians have yet to produce a heavyweight boxing champion or a Carl Lewis in men's track, and they've never won a Wimbledon tennis singles title. Asia's great hopes in the World's No. 1 sport, South Korea and Japan, were winless at last year's soccer World Cup.

There are still chasms between East and the rest in some track and field as well as swimming events. The men's 1,500-metre track world record stands at 3 minutes, 26 seconds, against Asia's fastest of 3:40.00.

An American quartet holds the world mark in the 400-metre swimming freestyle relay in 3:15.11, whereas the Asian best, set

by Japanese swimmers, stands at 3:23.80.

"We're still behind the West, to be honest, except in the marathon. As Asians progress in track, the Europeans also get better," says Nicholas, the Asian athletics official. "We're used to blueblood, amateur sports and that won't do any more when other countries go for a scientific approach and government support."

Alan Thompson, president of the World Swimming Coaches Association, said Asian swimmers were seeking more Western-style sports education and training under foreign coaches.

"That's paying dividends. Through sheer force of numbers Asia could be a world swimming power in the next century," said Thompson, adding that the 2000 Olympics in Australia and the 2002 World Cup soccer in Japan and South Korea would boost Asian sports in general.

"We have improved tremendously. Asians have closed the gap in almost every sport," said Bangkok Post sports writer Edward Thangarajah. "They are no longer content with winning gold medals. They're breaking world records."

Thangarajah, who has covered Asian Games since they started 47 years ago, predicted Japanese sprinter Ito would join the 26 runners, all of African descent, who have dipped below 10 seconds in the 100 metres.

And that Japan's wispy Naoko Takahashi would break the world women's marathon record of 2 hours, 20 minutes, 47 seconds. She came within a minute of doing so at the Asian Games, running against little opposition.

Those feats would wipe out forever any sports inferiority complex that may still be lingering in Asia.

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Ivanov tells Albright 'relations may seriously suffer' over Iraq

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov warned U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Friday that U.S.-Russian relations may "seriously suffer" should raids against Iraq continue.

"If this action does not stop, then Russian-U.S. relations could seriously suffer. This is not our choice," a Russian foreign ministry statement cited Ivanov as telling Albright in a telephone conversation.

Ivanov urged Albright to find a diplomatic solution to the Iraq crisis, the ministry statement said. "Should that happen, Russia will be ready, as before, to cooperate constructively with other members of the U.N. Security Council," Ivanov was cited as saying.

Russia continued to vent outrage that the decision to attack Iraq was made without reference to the U.N. Security Council, where the Kremlin has the power of veto.

Moscow late Thursday recalled its long-serving Washington ambassador, Yuli Vorontsov, for "consultations" in protest of U.S.-led strikes against Moscow's closest Middle East partner.

Moscow had never before ordered its Washington ambassador to pull out in this way.

This was followed early Friday by the recall of its ambassador to Britain, Yuri Fokin.

Moscow has further threatened to tear up all cooperation agreements with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) unless an instant end is put to the air strikes, and further delay ratification of the START missile disarmament treaty.

Albright, speaking in Washington, said she was disappointed with Russia's show of fury over the Iraq attacks, adding she was convinced that Washington's relations with the Kremlin will soon resolve themselves.

"It's unfortunate that they have done that," she said on CNN. "We are not recalling our ambassador."

"We obviously disagree about the use of force in Iraq but we have an important relationship with the Russians and will cooperate where we can and manage our differences."

Russia has placed its military on heightened alert following the launch late Wednesday of the U.S.-British Desert Fox

Duma votes to revoke sanctions

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Russian parliament Friday overwhelmingly adopted a resolution calling for a unilateral lifting of all sanctions against Iraq.

The State Duma lower house voted 237-1 with no abstentions for a resolution calling on President Boris Yeltsin to re-establish all economic ties with the Middle East nation "following an escalation of hostilities by the United States and Great Britain against Iraq."

The resolution carries no legal weight and serves only an advisory purpose.

Operation and has further threatened to tear up all cooperation agreements with NATO unless an instant end is put to the air strikes.

But Russia is reliant on Western loans and food shipments to pull the country out of its financial hole this winter, and the Kremlin took some small steps to bridge the foreign policy chasm developing with its allies over Iraq.

President Boris Yeltsin's spokesman Dmitry Yakushkin said the president condemned the strikes as "unacceptable" and called for them to stop immediately.

But he added Moscow did not want to "head toward a confrontation" with Washington and London, and said the

heightened Russian military alert was not directly linked to the air raids but a general precaution reflecting tensions across the world.

And a top U.S. Pentagon official on Friday played down reports of the Russian forces' alert.

"I don't make very much of that at this time," U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Hugh Shelton told a news conference, noting contradictory news reports about the Russian forces.

About 100 protesters on Friday threw rotten eggs at the U.S. consulate in Russia's second city, St. Petersburg, in protest at the U.S.-British air strikes, the Interfax agency reported.



ARAFAT CONCLUDES VISIT: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Friday sees off Palestinian President Yasser Arafat who on Friday concluded a two-day official visit to the Kingdom. During the visit, Arafat held talks with Prince Hassan and senior Jordanian officials. President Arafat reviewed with the Regent the latest developments in the Middle East region, particularly the situation in Iraq (Petra photo)

U.N. pulls out aid workers from Baghdad, skeleton staff stays

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The United Nations evacuated some 100 humanitarian workers from the Iraqi capital on Friday to ensure their safety, leaving behind only a skeleton crew of 28 international staff, a U.N. source said.

He said the departing staff headed off for Amman in a convoy of four buses and seven cars, after a night in which an explosion less than 1,000 metres away rocked the U.N. headquarters, without causing damage.

"We have 28 international staff still camped at the headquarters here, as well as local Iraqi staff. The situation is calm and stable" inside the building, the foreign humanitarian worker told AFP, asking not to be named.

The explosion rattled the windows of the U.N. headquarters at the former Canal Hotel on a night in which at least 10 missiles crashed down on Baghdad.

The United Nations said Wednesday that a total of 142 international staffers of the humanitarian programme in Baghdad were left after the evacuation of all U.N. arms inspectors.

"We have not been exposed to any danger," said the U.N. source, "but, in fact, we have

stopped operations since Wednesday."

He said the staff sheltered at the ground floor is the best we have. It's still better than what the average Iraqi has in Baghdad," the source said, speaking over a television set blaring CNN.

He said the U.N. humanitarian programme was keeping "a skeleton staff in Baghdad and will be ready to recommence operations as soon as the 'friendly fire' stops."

The evacuees have been "temporarily relocated in Amman," he said, while an Iraqi colleague said "one employee of each of the U.N. departments" was kept on in Baghdad.

Outside, the normal handful of Iraqi soldiers were posted in front of the hotel. The barrier to the car park was down and there was no unusual activity, a witness said.

Already on Wednesday, 66 U.N. humanitarian workers left Baghdad on "scheduled holidays."

The humanitarian staff are in charge of supervising the "oil-

for-food" programme under which sanctions-hit Iraq is allowed to export a set amount of crude to finance imports of badly-needed food and medicine.

The programme's spokesman in Baghdad, George Somerville, was among the evacuees, said the U.N. source.

The humanitarian aid to Iraq's population of 22 million has slowed following U.S. missile strikes on Baghdad started on Wednesday night, Somerville said Thursday.

"It's running at a minimum level," he said. "We hope that [the staff reduction] will not affect Iraqi citizens."

Another 232 humanitarian workers in Kurdish-held northern Iraq, which lies outside Baghdad's authority, remain in place, according to U.N. officials, who said there were no plans for their evacuation.

But Lloyd's of London on Wednesday withdrew experts from most border points in Iraq where they were certifying the arrival of humanitarian goods.

Another U.N. official said however that there was no risk of food shortages in Iraq because of the Lloyd's decision, as there were "significant supplies of stocks."



Candy makes life longer

LONDON (UPI) — A recent survey found that chocolate can make a potential sex partner more receptive, and now scientists are reporting that people who eat candy may live longer than those who don't. According to a study published by researchers from Harvard University published (Thursday) in the British Medical Journal, antioxidants in chocolate and other candies may well be good for the heart.

Song bird probed for learning during sleep

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Research on song birds is providing clues on how the sleeping brain might work to help people learn, remember and fine tune physical performance. Researchers at the University of Chicago have shown that while young zebra finch sleep at night, they may be consolidating the songs they've learned from their parents during the day. The scientists report their findings in Friday's issue of the journal Science.

Day seeks 'King' transfer for gorilla

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Actress Doris Day is urging that a gorilla named King be transferred from "solitary confinement" to a new zoo as a Christmas present that is coming almost two decades late. King, 29, is a Western lowland gorilla who has spent the last 18 years in what she termed a desolate concrete and bars cage at Miami's "Monkey Jungle." "It is unthinkable that King should have to suffer solitary confinement at Monkey Jungle any longer," Day, the founder and president of the 250,000-member Doris Day Animal League, wrote to Sharon Dumond, president of Monkey Jungle.

Baby-swapping shocks village

BUDAPEST (AFP) — A Hungarian gypsy family is suing a local hospital alleging that their healthy baby boy was swapped for a girl born with spina bifida, a report said Thursday. The Orsos family went to court after their 28-year-old mentally-retarded daughter gave birth to a healthy boy, but the hospital gave them a girl born with incurable spine disorder, said the Nepszava newspaper.

Nude sculptures as backdrop in China

BEIJING (AFP) — A pair of nude sculptures of a man and woman has overcome traditional Chinese coyness about sex in the northern automobile capital of Changchun and become a backdrop for picture-taking. The official Xinhua news agency reported Friday city fathers voiced concern over whether local residents would accept the six-metre tall statues when they were first installed and suggested the man's penis be covered up. "However, to their surprise they discovered that most of the city's two million urban dwellers did not mind at all and now the statues have become an attraction for thousands of Changchun residents and tourists to the city," the report said.

Tyson wants to counsel teenagers

PHOENIX (AP) — Mike Tyson wants to go back to jail — to counsel teenagers. The former heavyweight champion has asked permission to visit convicted teens in the Arizona's Maricopa County Jail system. Tyson, who plans to fight Francois Botha on Jan. 16 in Las Vegas in his first bout since his boxing licence was restored in October, wants to tell the young offenders "to make correct life choices so as to avoid many of the pitfalls that Tyson has faced in his life," his attorney, Darrow Sol, said in a letter to Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

Missiles against Iraq now exceed those in Gulf war

WASHINGTON (AFP) — U.S. forces have launched more missiles against Iraq in the last two days than they did during the entire Gulf war, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Hugh Shelton said Friday.

"The total number of air- and sea-launched cruise missiles now exceed the total number expended during Operation Desert Storm," Shelton told a

Pentagon briefing, though he declined to give numbers.

Earlier Friday a U.S. defence official said between 400 and 500 cruise missiles had been fired in Operation Desert Fox by US warships and B-52 bombers.

That far exceeds the 288 sea-launched Tomahawk cruise missiles and 35 air-launched missiles fired

during the war against Iraq in January 1991.

The missiles, which fly a pre-programmed route to its target, have been upgraded since the Gulf war making them more accurate at longer distances.

The air force version of the cruise missile has a 900 kilogramme warhead, twice that of the sea-launched variety, but a

shorter range at 600 nautical miles.

Both the navy and air force cruise missiles are now vectored into their targets by navigational satellites, which has enhanced their precision.

The Tomahawk cruise missile is capable of hitting within three metres of its target 80 per cent of the time, the U.S. Navy says.

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Israel warns Iraq not to attack

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel will take all necessary measures against Iraq should it "dare" to attack the Jewish state, the defence minister said Friday.

The minister, Yitzhak Mordechai, was more direct in his warning than Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who on Thursday, the first day of U.S. airstrikes against Iraq, would only say that Israel reserved the right to defend itself.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has not threatened to attack Israel in retaliation for the U.S. bombings, and Mordechai told Israel Radio there has been no change in the military's assessment that chances of an Iraqi missile attack on Israel were slim.

However, Israel army radio quoted a military source as saying that Iraq has Sukhoi SU-27 warplanes with enough range to reach Israel and that Israel has mobilised all reserves in its anti-aircraft force.

Israel's military intelligence analysts believe Saddam might fire missiles at Israel only if he were desperate or facing death.

Mordechai said Israel would like to see the American-British operation achieve its goals, but that Israel has "no interest, directly or indirectly," in taking part in the fighting.

Hoss government wins parliamentary vote of confidence

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss' government won a parliamentary vote of confidence Thursday night after two days of debate on its policy statement.

Eight-five of the 128 parliamentarians supported Hoss, whose policy is based on a program to cure the ailing economy.

Among the 31 MPs who abstained were supporters of Hoss' predecessor, Rafik Hariri, and former Minister for the Displaced Walid Jumblatt and MPs from the Iranian- and Syrian-backed Hizbollah.

Twelve other MPs were not in the chamber for the vote.

Hoss told his critics, many of them ministers from the Hariri cabinet, that "the former government left us an exorbitant debt, a recurrent budget deficit and an administration gnawed by corruption."

The new prime minister, an economist by training, defended his plan to privatise some public services as "the only way to break the vicious circle of indebtedness and deficits."

The country's budget deficit rose to 22 per cent of gross domestic product last year.

Netanyahu accepts Neeman's resignation

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday accepted the resignation of Finance Minister Yaacov Neeman and will assume the portfolio himself, his office said.

Neeman announced his decision to quit earlier this week, saying sharp divisions in Netanyahu's right-wing coalition over his peace deal with the Palestinians were blocking passage of the 1999 budget by a Dec. 31 deadline.

"It is impossible to be a responsible finance minister when the budget or other significant bills come before parliament and coalition legisla-

tors vote against the government," Neeman told a press conference on Friday.

He appealed to parliament to pass the budget and a related arrangements bill to avoid "real damage to the Israeli economy."

Neeman, an independent technocrat and a Netanyahu ally, rejected criticism he was abandoning his post less than two weeks before the budget deadline.

"I'm not fleeing. I wanted to set a personal example," he said. "There is no reason to endorse such behaviour by members of the coalition by staying here."

دليل تيسو